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Keeping Cattle?

The Politics of Value in the Communal Areas of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

DISSERTATION

Presented for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Department of Anthropology

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

By

Andrew Murray Ainslie

March 2005

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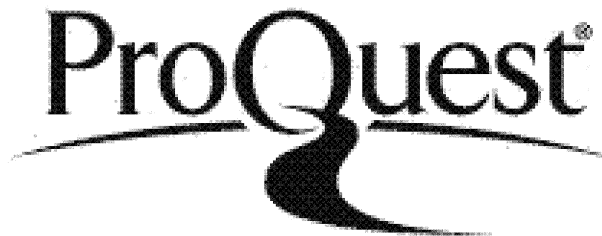
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the cultural politics and economics of the ownership, exchange and consumption of cattle in Peddie District in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Specifically, the question for which I sought an explanation is why- given a long history of government attempts to limit and channel cattle ownership by rural Xhosa people, as well as what appeared to be entrenched processes of de-agrarianisation, economic decline and considerable circular migration between town and country - did many of the people living in the communal areas of the Eastern Cape (i.e. the former bantustans of Ciskei and Transkei) express a keen interest to own cattle?

Drawing on nine years of research engagement in Peddie District, and thirteen months of fieldwork in two villages, this dissertation explores how cattle were practically and discursively enmeshed in people's everyday livelihoods, accumulation strategies and domestic – including gender and generational – struggles of rural homesteads in Peddie District. It was clear that cattle enjoyed considerable appeal as some of the 'big notes' in a rural economy that was dominated by social welfare transfers and casualised employment.

I found that one way to gain a fuller understanding of people's investments in cattle was to analyse their variable social and structural positions within the village milieu, their economic trajectories and their broader cultural projects over time. I attempt to do this by presenting a number of biographical sketches of people pursuing two broad economic, cultural and ritual projects, i.e. that of *ukwakh'umzi* [to build the homestead] and *masincedisane* [let us help each other]. I employ case-studies to illustrate the range of differentiated interpretations, strategies and manipulations of specifically local bovine resources that variously situated people, as members of different households, employed in pursuit of these projects.

For rural people in Peddie District, especially men and some widows, holding cattle meant trying to maximise their use of available physical (i.e. 'free' grazing and water resources on the commons), economic (the use of state-subsidised dipping and inoculation programmes and of household labour) and cultural resources (patriarchal values, bridewealth, norms of accumulation and sharing, and ritual practices) to advance their particular social projects, within the limited range of options open to them.

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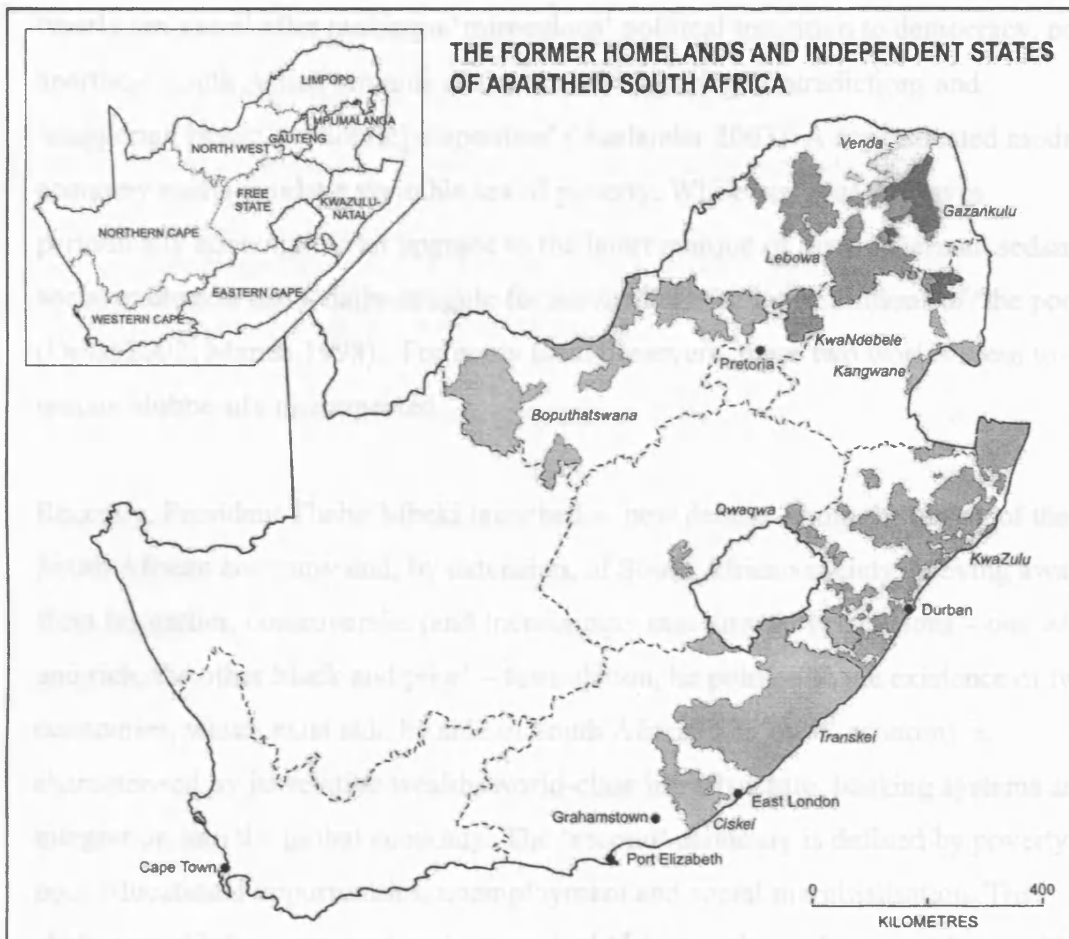
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Glossary of Xhosa words, South African English (SAE) terms and acronyms used frequently in the dissertation

<i>inkazana</i> (pl. <i>amankazana</i>)	unmarried mother/s
<i>ikhay'enkhulu</i>	lit. the big home, the natal homestead
<i>intloko yekhaya</i>	the head of the household [home]
<i>intsika yekhaya</i>	lit. the pillar of the home, the main bread-winner and authority figure
<i>isahlulo</i>	share-cropping
<i>isirhoxo</i>	small shop in the village that sells food and domestic goods, often in small quantities
<i>isiko</i> (pl. <i>amasiko</i>)	traditional custom, cultural practice
<i>masihlalisane</i>	lit. let us live together, cohabitation.
<i>masincedisane</i>	lit. let us help each other, idiom of mutual assistance
<i>masingcwabane</i>	lit. let us bury each other, burial society
<i>mqombothi</i>	home-brewed sorghum beer
<i>ubudoda</i>	manhood, the values and behaviour that go with being a (Xhosa) man
<i>ubuqaba</i>	the complex of traditionalist and conservative cultural (and moral) values
<i>ujongekhaya</i>	one who looks after the home
<i>ukuhlonipa</i>	to use the language & behaviour of avoidance and respect
<i>ukuncedisana</i>	to help each other (infinitive of <i>masincedisane</i>)
<i>ukuvula 'mzi</i>	a ritual to open the home, i.e. to inform the ancestors that one has a new home
<i>ukwakh 'umzi</i>	to build the homestead
<i>umgalelo</i> (pl. <i>imigalelo</i>)	rotating credit association or bulking buying club based on regular contributions from members
<i>umanyano</i>	women's prayer group
<i>umkhonto wekhaya</i>	lit. the spear of the home, the spear used to slaughter animals during rituals
<i>umnini wendlu</i>	the head of the household
<i>umntu omkhulu</i>	old, more senior person
<i>umsebenzi</i> (pl. <i>imisebenzi</i>)	lit. work, a ritual event, particularly one invoking the ancestors
<i>umthetho</i> (pl. <i>imithetho</i>)	social rules of behaviour, norms,
<i>umzi</i> (pl. <i>imizi</i>)	homestead
bakkie (SAE)	light delivery van, pick-up
kraal (SAE)	cattle byre
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme
Reserves/bantustan/homelands/	various names for the areas designated for exclusive occupation by African (black) people in colonial and apartheid South Africa.
<i>shebeen</i>	drinking house in the village

CHAPTER ONE

Map 1: The former homelands and independent states of apartheid South Africa



CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

Nearly ten years¹ after making a ‘miraculous’ political transition to democracy, post-apartheid South Africa remains characterised by jarring contradictions and ‘staggering [socio-economic] disparities’ (Auslander 2003). A sophisticated modern economy exists amidst a veritable sea of poverty. While many of the haves periodically contemplate an upgrade to the latest marque of luxury German sedan, social exclusion and a daily struggle for survival are the lot of millions of ‘the poors’ (Desai 2002; Marais 1998). For many local observers, these two worlds seem to remain stubbornly unconnected.

Recently, President Thabo Mbeki launched a ‘new debate’ about the nature of the South African economy and, by extension, of South African society. Moving away from his earlier, controversial (and increasingly inaccurate) ‘two-nations – one white and rich, the other black and poor’ – formulation, he pointed to the existence of two economies, which exist side by side in South Africa. The ‘first’ economy is characterised by its relative wealth, world-class infrastructure, banking systems and integration into the global economy. The ‘second’ economy is defined by poverty, poor educational opportunities, unemployment and social marginalisation. The challenge, chief government spokesman Joel Netshitenzhe said, was to ‘destroy [the second economy] so that we are left with one first-class developed economy that will benefit everyone’ (Hlope 2003).

The persistence of dualisms

What is remarkable about Mbeki’s ‘new’ formulation is that this dualist conceptualisation has survived – virtually intact – the transition from the colonial and apartheid era, to resurface in the post-apartheid South Africa of the new millennium.

¹ The ‘ethnographic present’ for this dissertation is 2001, the year in which I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork.

It is forty years ago now that the then influential South African economist, Houghton, re-affirmed the by-then long-accepted binary distinction, namely the existence of a clear dichotomy between the economic backwardness of African reserves in the rural hinterland of South Africa and the modern, efficient and market-driven 'white' farming and industrial economy of the country. He stated that

In South Africa, there is a...fundamental line of cleavage...of such importance that there may be said to be two different types of rural economies existing side by side in the same country. One is the essentially market-oriented farming, as practised by white farmers, and the other is the largely subsistence-oriented farming of African peasants in the reserves. The difference between the two is deep-seated and manifests itself in a variety of ways reflecting cultural differences and fundamental attitudes to the exploitation of the natural environment...The differences between market-oriented farming and subsistence farming are so great that they cannot conveniently be treated together (Houghton 1973 [1964]: 46-48).

In making these assertions, Hobart Houghton epitomised the liberal white position of the time, with its associated narrative stressing the urgent need for African adaptation and modernisation, principally through Western education (MacMillan 1991: 85; Bundy 1988).² Many anthropologists endorsed this view, as Sansom demonstrated with his model of 'the stages of development of the dual economy' in South Africa (Sansom 1974; cf. Ferguson 1999: 86-91; MacMillan 1991: 90-92).

Indeed, in the 'serious fictions of the South African social imagination' (Coplan 1998: 140), the deeply-ingrained habit of binary thought, encapsulated in such classic dualisms as black-white, masculine-feminine, African-Western, rural-urban, rich-poor, modern-traditional, domination-resistance and sophisticated-backward, lives on (see Mamdani 1996; Vink & Kirsten 2003: 3). This is true even when long-standing dualisms are roundly rejected by academic commentators, yet creep back into the public discourse, smoothed out into 'continuums', that merely position the original binaries at opposite ends of the scale (as in Tapson 1997; Ferguson 1999).

² As Martin Murray (1996: 22) points out, however, 'peasant' practices such as share-cropping and 'other non-capitalist forms of production cannot be treated as inert and static categories...external and inimical to capitalist development, with their own linear histories, temporalities, and spatial integrities. They must be understood instead as part and parcel of the wider historical process of combined and uneven capitalist development whereby the countryside is subjugated, or "ruralised".' (See also Long 1992b: 29-31; James 2001). This section owes a great deal to Ferguson's (2001[1990]: 135-138) penetrating analysis of dualism in development planning and in the livestock sector in particular.

Analysing cattle production in the reserves of the Eastern Cape Province

One of my objectives here is to explore the *economic* dualisms that are said to characterise agricultural production in different pockets of the South African countryside (cf. Gupta 1998).³ For both intellectual and practical reasons, I have chosen to analyse the cattle production sector of the former reserve areas of the Eastern Cape. My overall research endeavour is to understand the interrelationships between regional patterns of economic organisation and opportunity, and more localised processes of accumulation, in which cattle feature as one possible arena of social and economic investment (cf. Long 1992b: 29). More specifically, I address the question why, if investments in cattle supposedly represent a 'traditional mode of economy' that is destined to fade away over time, cattle are currently so numerous and sought after by many people in the reserve areas of the Eastern Cape.

On a practical note, I have been employed since 1997 as a researcher by the Range and Forage Institute (RFI), one of a number of institutes that make up the South African parastatal Agricultural Research Council. Established in 1992, the RFI is mandated to conduct research into the condition and management of grazing resources across South Africa, in collaboration with other government departments and the users of rangelands.

As a social anthropologist with an interest in applied research, I was prompted by my colleagues in the RFI to seek answers to the ecological 'problem' apparently posed by vast numbers of cattle (and goats and sheep) that are held, purportedly for 'cultural' reasons, by the residents in the former bantustan areas of the country. As I delved into the literature that dealt with the various aspects of cattle production in the reserve areas, it became apparent that remarkably little empirical research had actually been conducted directly on cattle ownership and production in the reserve areas of the Eastern Cape. The available literature was characterised by a good deal of speculative argument, cross-referencing and extrapolation from the handful of earlier agricultural studies (Steyn 1982, 1988; Bembridge 1984; Van Rooyen *et al.* 1981; Fraser 1991; cf. Düvel & Afful 1996).

³ Of course, the sector is characterised by stark differences in respect of racial access to land and types of land tenure.

Upon querying this state of affairs, it was suggested to me that research into these issues was hampered partly because rural Africans were acutely distrustful of outsiders seeking to make detailed enquiries into their livestock holdings and practices. It occurred to me, however, that the sentiments of rural people might not be the only issue at stake here. Rather, much of the work dealing with cattle production under communal tenure systems, certainly that published before 1990, seemed to serve primarily as ammunition in wider ideological struggles around issues of land tenure (see, for example, the collections edited by De Wet & McAllister [1987] and Cross & Haines [1988]; cf. Berry 1994: vii). Free marketeers campaigned vigorously against the perceived woes of communal tenure and pointed to cattle production as the quintessence of what was wrong in these systems. By relying uncritically on Hardin's (1968) 'Tragedy of the Commons' thesis, these observers made much of the environmentally destructive and economically inefficient nature of cattle production under communal tenure, but without long-term empirical evidence to substantiate their claims (Lyne & Nieuwoudt 1991; Vink 1987; cf. Shackleton 1993; Anim & Lyne 1992).

In January 1999, I commenced a preliminary study of the cattle production sector in the former bantustans, to map out the terrain (see Ainslie [ed] 2002). For this study, I returned to Peddie District where I had previously conducted detailed fieldwork during 1995-1997 (see Ainslie 1998). For my doctoral thesis, I undertook fieldwork in two villages in rural Peddie District during the period October 2000 to November 2001.

My interest in the 'cultural economy' of cattle production in the former reserve areas of South Africa was stimulated by two texts in particular. One was Murray's *Families Divided* (1981a) and the other was Ferguson's *The Anti-Politics Machine* (2001 [1990]). Both authors were at pains to point out how much more complex and nuanced the *Basotho* cultural practice of cattle ownership was than mere survival. In setting out both the broader, structural constraints and exploring the micro-political, economic, social and cultural dynamics of cattle ownership at the household level, these authors challenged the stubborn divide between cultural and economic analyses (cf. MacMillan 1991; Turkon 2003). These two ethnographies also served as my introduction to the vast ethnographic literature which spans much of the twentieth century, and which explores virtually every aspect of pastoralist and agro-

pastoralist cultures and economies in Southern and East Africa (see, for example, Herskovits 1926; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Fielder 1973; Comaroff & Comaroff 1991; Homewood 1995; Hutchinson 1996; MacKinnon 1999; Hodgson 2000).

As will become evident, by emphasising cattle ownership I do not wish to suggest that cattle ownership is *the* (or even *a*) key index of some essentialised set of 'Xhosa' cultural practices or value systems in the Eastern Cape. Quite clearly there are a number of other, overlapping structural and contingent factors that inform the changes and the continuities evident in what is obviously a wide (and growing) range of practices and cultural values extant in the province. These include, in no particular order, the resurgent traditional authorities (see Ntsebeza 2002; Wotshela 2001), the uneven effects of urbanisation (Bank 2002a), agrarian changes and adaptations (McAllister 2001; Kepe 2002a; Fay 2003), issues around household identity and changing gender politics (Ngwane 2001, 2003; Mager 1989; Mann 2000) and the effects of livelihood alternatives or the lack thereof (Monde 2003). Instead, I have focussed on cattle because the cattle owned and used by people who have their homes in the former bantustan areas of the province are strategic in at least two senses.

In the first sense, I consider that the characterisation of what rural people purportedly do or fail to do with these cattle is a paradigmatic case of the dualism which remains a feature of current conceptualisation and policy development in the agriculture sector in South Africa (Ainslie 2002b; Vink & Kirsten 2003; cf. Gupta 1998: 31).⁴ The second sense in which I think it is strategic to focus on cattle ownership has to do with the reality that cattle, which serve as markers of particular cultural spaces which are increasingly contested in the countryside, can provide us with valuable insights into changes and continuities in Xhosa cultural practices.

⁴ It could be asked whether it matters that a fundamental dualism of backward/ modern or traditional/commercial continues to pervade popular portrayals, academic analyses and government policy making and programme implementation in the cattle production sector. A cursory review of the history of pastoralist development interventions across sub-Saharan Africa suggests that it does (Kerven 1992; Hodgson 1999: 221; Anderson 1993; Scoones [ed.] 1995; Peters 1994).

Cattle ownership: The view from above

If, as Sansom argued cogently, the duality that ‘pervaded economics’ in the reserve areas of South Africa was artificially prolonged through ‘peculiar [and gendered] restrictions’ on African employment, mobility and ability of Africans to own property, then the question arises as to why the progressive lifting of these restrictions since at least 1986 has apparently not led to ‘final economic interpenetration’ and the collapse of the ‘traditional [cattle-centred] economy’. (Sansom 1974: 135,176; MacMillan 1991). Indeed, Sansom’s prediction of the ‘collapse’ of the cattle economy echoed similar dire predictions that have been put forward by natural scientists and administrators in South Africa and elsewhere in the region since the 1930s, that have also not come about (see Beinart 1984). What this linear model of inevitable decline fails to do, as MacKinnon (1999: 98-99) points out for Zululand, is to take full account of the ‘shrewd and efficacious means [employed by Africans] of adapting aspects of a pre-colonial economy to the capitalist context’.

The Comaroffs have, in their work among the Tshidi Barolong, provided important insights into why this ‘collapse’ has not occurred, or at least not in the dramatic fashion that was predicted earlier. The significance of cattle for many rural Africans, they asserted, is that cattle have long had ‘economic, utility value and are also signifiers *par excellence* of a particular social and cultural landscape’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 195; cf. Coertze 1986; Mayer 1980b; Switzer 1993: 304). I argue that an analysis of cattle ownership among rural Xhosa-speaking people can throw light on the cultural continuities in their current practices and point to the economic and social fault-lines that present-day investment in cattle exposes among them.

It is my contention that much of the recent work that stresses the economic value of livestock in communal areas strengthens the hands of the agricultural economists who now seem to dominate mainstream debates on agrarian transformation in South Africa (Shackleton *et al.* 2001; Vink & Kirsten 2003; cf. Bernstein 1997). I suggest that this is because analyses that hinge on measures of economic ‘efficiency’, and which do not give due and equal consideration to the historical, cultural, social and symbolic values of these herds, ultimately only provide a partial account of the

practices and meanings that animate the ownership and uses that people make of cattle in the former bantustan areas.⁵

Cattle ownership: The view from below

As suggested above, the second sense in which I think it is strategic to focus on cattle ownership relates to the role of cattle as markers of a particular cultural politics of value. I argue that the situated ownership and contemporary uses that Xhosa-speaking rural people *qua* social actors make of cattle present us with a fascinating opportunity to explore how ordinary people 'practise their culture' as they attempt to deal with everyday experiences, whether it be in securing their livelihoods or celebrating a ritual (Long 1992a).

Theoretically, I approach the study of cattle holding in rural Peddie District as a dynamic component of a larger 'cultural topography of wealth' (Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 1986). As earlier, socially embedded uses that cattle served for Xhosa-speakers have been eclipsed, new modes and meanings for the utilisation of cattle have come about. These new meanings need to be carved out of earlier meanings and defended by social actors against alternative representations and against contested notions of commoditisation engendered by the economic realities of everyday life. The politics of commodities, Ferguson (1992: 70) has pointed out, '...are always twofold. [I]nterested categories of people enter into contestation not only over who will have the goods, but equally how the terrain of goods itself will be structured'. The years of post-apartheid democracy in South Africa have spawned new and competing 'regimes of value', but ones in which once-dominant and the new cultural paths of wealth, status and hierarchy are arguably less hegemonic and more fragmented and thus possibly more contested now than at any time in the past (Niehaus 1994; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999).

The political overthrow of apartheid lifted the lid on the searing, often violent, struggles being waged in villages, peri-urban settlements and townships across the country (Ramphela 2000; Wood & Jewkes 2001). 'There is a war between men and

⁵ On this point, see Gudeman (2001: 81) who argues that 'anthropologists are caught in a dialectic with Western economists. Both offer essentialist or modernist views: one is relational, the other atomistic. One side emphasizes altruism, the other egoism.'

women', one of my (male) informants told me quite matter-of-factly, reflecting on the endless, unnerving stream of press reports about often brutal domestic violence, including rape and child abuse, around the country. This is the 'epidemic of violence' that characterises everyday situations among men and between men and women, often within the household, in which gendered and generational control of the whole gamut of symbolic and material resources is at stake (Mager 1989: 57; Morrell 2001).

The objective of this study

Taking my cue from the exemplary studies of Shipton (1989), Hutchinson (1996) and Ferguson (2001 [1990]), my objective is to provide a detailed ethnography of the contemporary meanings and place(s) of cattle in the cultural constructs, social practices and livelihood strategies of Xhosa-speaking people in Peddie District of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This has not been undertaken in this way before (but see Beinart 1982). My analysis includes a review of the major political economic changes that have had an impact on the cattle sector over the period 1930-2001.

My main intention is here to unpack the situated perspectives of my informants, to explore how the meanings and practices associated with cattle husbandry help or hinder people in making sense of the contemporary struggles over space, labour and identity in the decentred 'rural-urban' economy that characterises the Eastern Cape Province.

Given the close association between cattle and rural patriarchy, my aim is also to investigate whether the uses to which rural people put cattle helps to smooth over existing social tensions between different people or, alternatively, to mark particular gendered and other boundaries and to reinforce the struggles between differently situated people. My hope is that this analysis will feed into wider debates about land reform and agrarian change, market-driven economic development and environmental sustainability that are at times far removed from the things that seem important to rural people as they piece together their livelihoods in places like Peddie District (Hart, G. 2002; Gupta 1998).

Doing ethnographic fieldwork in post-apartheid South Africa

The political and moral dilemmas of conducting anthropological research in South Africa under apartheid have been discussed and analysed at considerable length (see, for example, Gluckman 1975; Kuper 1986, 1988; Gordon & Spiegel 1993; Van der Waal 1992; Kiernan 1997). As Coplan illustrates, conducting ethnographic fieldwork research in post-apartheid South Africa and southern Africa has its own trials and tribulations (Coplan 1998; Gordon 2003: 136; De Wet 2001).

One of the challenges is that village residents view the researcher essentially as an educated and well-resourced intermediary who can, and indeed *should*, intercede on their behalf in their unequal interactions with government agencies in the pursuit of infrastructure and service improvements for their village. This can be a difficult process to manage since the young graduate researcher seldom has official contacts within government departments. In my case, my employment at the parastatal RFI, my prior research association with some middle-range local government officials and the fact that our Institute had been involved in promoting natural resource management-related development projects in a few villages in Peddie District, meant that some village residents felt that I should be able to ‘deliver’ to them on a more substantial scale. I was constantly conscious of having to play down my ability to ‘deliver’ anything to them.

People in both villages required an explanation of why I had chosen their village and how my chosen research topic would affect local people. This is the slippery terrain of negotiations over access to research sites and of securing the co-operation of research subjects. It is also about the politics of the production of knowledge, its relevance and its subsequent uses, that most would-be social researchers, certainly in rural South Africa, are confronted with nowadays (Coplan 1998: 136). To assist me in presenting my case, I called on an old confidant, who was a local African National Congress (ANC) political leader, to officially introduce me to the two communities of Hamburg and Loverstwit.⁶ This way, I reasoned, at least the local political leadership, and the residents in both villages, could get a sense of my political sentiments and I knew it would be helpful if local people were reassured about my

⁶ More than 98% of the voters in Peddie District voted for the ANC in the first two post-apartheid general elections, i.e. 1994 and 1999.

status as someone who supported the ANC government's transformative and 'people-centred' political-economic agenda (Hart, G. 2002; cf. Murphy's [1992] paper on his similar experiences in an Andalusian village).

One reason for selecting these two 'eastern' villages was that I had previously conducted most of my research in the drier, western side of Peddie District, an area known as Tyefu Location (Ainslie 1998).⁷ I had been interested to discover why rural villagers seemed unable to take collective responsibility for the management of the local natural resources which many people were utilising and dependent on for at least part of their livelihoods. I found that the western side of the district appeared to be in the grip of a longer-term process, what other observers at the time were calling 'de-agrarianisation', and I went on to characterise Gwabeni village in particular as an example of a 'post-agrarian rural' settlement (Ainslie 1998). After completing this study, I was concerned that my analysis of one particularly economically depressed area (i.e. Tyefu Location), could be taken as representative of the whole Peddie District.⁸ My unease was prompted by discussions with officials and residents of other parts of Peddie District, who more astutely foresaw that my analysis of conditions in Tyefu Location might result in the whole district being overlooked by government's development programmes. With their assertions of a more vibrant agrarian economy in the higher-rainfall, eastern side of the district, they encouraged me to look afresh at agrarian production in this area. It quickly emerged that the livestock, specifically cattle, economy continued to flourish along the coastal belt, and needed to be accounted for in the light of my earlier, more pessimistic account of a 'post-agrarian rural' economy.

In selecting fieldwork sites, I opted for what I took to be two contrasting villages, in the hope that this would give me a sense of the local variation in settlement types, cattle ownership and production practices in the area. Loverstwest is a small, recently established settlement, inhabited mostly by poorly educated former farmworkers (see below). Hamburg has a longer history as a settlement which dates back to the 1850s, and many of the local residents have long put a premium on education. From cursory

⁷ In early 1999, with the assistance of Welile Mzozoyana, I had conducted interviews and administered questionnaires to 12 cattle-owners in Loverstwest as part of a preparatory study (see Ainslie 2002e).

⁸ This is partly the issue of just how representative one's research findings are and partly about the 'crisis of representation' that has befallen social research more generally (see Ortner 1995: 190).

visits to both villages, I was aware that cattle ownership constituted a substantial component of local accumulation strategies.⁹

With regard to conducting fieldwork, I was committed to actively seeking out local people's voices to incorporate into my ethnographic material. On the other hand, I recognised the considerable structural power I wielded as an educated and (in relative terms) monied *mlungu* [white man] and there is no doubt that this had an impact on my myriad relationships with people in the villages. It seemed impossible, both during the fieldwork encounter itself and later, while analysing my data, selecting what data to include in the dissertation and what to leave out, and finally in writing up this dissertation, to escape the 'structural violence' that permeates the ethnographic enterprise, only far more so, given the political and racial history of South Africa (Hastrup 1992: 122; Scheper-Hughes 1995: 437).

The fears of people in the two villages were real as the topic of my research, cattle ownership, was and remains a symbolically potent, and thus jealously guarded, element of rural Xhosa cultural identity and economic accumulation in places like Peddie District. This was where the intervention of my ANC comrade (and, I presume, my prior track record) was most valuable in assuaging people's fears regarding my 'real' (almost certainly, from their perspective, more nefarious) intentions in wanting to study their patterns of cattle ownership and use. Moreover, I indicated that I could be reached in nearby Grahamstown, where I was employed and would continue to work after my fieldwork was completed.

My request for permission to live with a host family in each of the two villages also did much to convince people of my *bona fides* and to build their trust in me and my research endeavour. However, a handful of the senior men in both villages remained sceptical about my research, and only reluctantly agreed to be interviewed. Even

⁹ It is necessary to point out that neither Loverstwiss nor Hamburg is a 'traditional' village in the context of the reserve areas of the former Ciskei, in the sense that neither of them have, for instance, been under modified forms of communal tenure for the past 150 years. Nevertheless, I am confident that both Loverstwiss and Hamburg are sufficiently similar, on the one hand, to the conditions that pertain in other reserve area villages and, on the other hand, capture enough of the wide range of differences in settlement and tenure histories experienced by people in Peddie District, to illuminate the key aspects of cattle ownership, rural livelihoods and cultural practices that I have foregrounded in my analysis.

then, they were guarded about what details they disclosed about their herds.¹⁰ Only one man, the owner of the biggest herd of cattle in Loverstwit, consistently avoided me and refused to disclose any information about his household or his cattle, which he kept on a neighbouring farm.

Since the chronic lack of employment is what distresses rural people a great deal, I made it known that I would be able to employ one person on a regular basis, and two or three others for much shorter periods, to assist with elements of my research. I thus engaged a number of research assistants in Hamburg and Loverstwit. I employed a young man, Fezile Zibi, to teach me *isiXhosa* during my first three months of fieldwork. I was adamant that after living and conducting research in the Eastern Cape for eight years, it was time to become proficient in *isiXhosa*.¹¹

We worked on this language training for four hours each day and then engaged in participant observation around the village, meeting people, attending rituals and public meetings and drawing a detailed map of the village. My *isiXhosa* improved rapidly and I was subsequently able to conduct simple interviews in the vernacular. But I was always aware that what I had been taught was, for the most part and despite my attempts to the contrary, grammatically correct, 'shallow' *isiXhosa*, not the 'deep', idiomatically rich language in use around me that I could hear but not grasp clearly. This remained a frustration throughout my fieldwork, despite my attempts to constantly learn new words and phrases. I conducted interviews with key informants either in English where this was practicable, or asked Zibi, and later Patrick Gussha, to accompany me and to assist me with translation.

I found that the post-interview debriefing sessions I held, especially with the disarmingly candid Patrick Gussha, could at times be nearly as enlightening as the

¹⁰ During the course of my fieldwork, an old rumour from the Ciskei bantustan days resurfaced in the province. This was that the government planned to cut off the old-age pension of anyone who held more than ten cattle, as they were considered to be 'rich'. This rumour was quickly debunked by officials in the Department of Agriculture, but it caused enough distress that President Mbeki saw fit to dismiss it while attending a political rally in the former Transkei (*Daily Dispatch* 27 November 2000). The incident demonstrated just how sensitive rural people remain about outside interference in their cattle holding practices.

¹¹ I grew up in the Orange Free State and had some exposure to *Sesotho* in my youth, but none to *isiXhosa*. Upon arrival at Rhodes University in 1991, I studied *Xhosa I* and passed it easily but I lacked the confidence to engage in conversation with Xhosa-speakers beyond the usual pleasantries. After these intensive lessons in Hamburg, my proficiency and confidence improved markedly

interview itself, because of the context and the connections to earlier events that we could tease out for why the informant had said something or perhaps withheld certain information (cf. Gudeman & Rivera 1990). I resolved to be far more probing and less self-consciously polite, while staying within the bounds of local social etiquette, in my attempts to understand what people were saying, doing and thinking, than I had been previously. I think this approach has paid off both in my understanding of the context and in the ethnographic material I have collected.

I employed two other people in Hamburg. A young woman, Nonzukiso Yekani, assisted me with interviews of individuals from all the households that had conducted rituals in the period November 2000 to October 2001. Xolani Manjezi assisted me by administering a limited number of 'herd-survey' questionnaires to cattle-owners in Hamburg. The bulk of the herd surveys were administered to cattle owners by Patrick Gusha. Fezile Zibi and Patrick Gusha also assisted me in administering a 'household livelihood' questionnaire survey to a random sample of 60 occupied households in Hamburg village.

The same tasks in the smaller village of Loverstwest were ably undertaken by Sonwabo Mase, where he and I administered the 'herd-survey' questionnaire to all (but one) cattle-holding homesteads and the 'household livelihood' questionnaire to a random sample of 30 households in Loverstwest.¹² Sakhumzi Skina assisted me by administering a brief interview schedule to people to record the details of all the rituals conducted in Loverstwest between April 2001 and November 2001. The life-history interviews which I conducted in Loverstwest were all done with the assistance of Sonwabo Mase, either in translating directly during the interviews, or in filling in the gaps during post-interview debriefings. In some cases, Sonwabo Mase conducted the interviews himself (see Bibliography for the list of interviews).

In Hamburg, I resided with the Mkhaya¹³ family, who were gracious if initially intrigued to be playing host to a young white researcher. A well-respected, teetotaling Methodist who attended church every Sunday practically without fail,

¹² Because of his fine disposition and work ethic, I have subsequently managed to have Sonwabo Mase employed by the RFI on an annual contract basis.

¹³ This is a pseudonym to protect their identity as I refer to the household in subsequent chapters.

Mr. Mkhaya had been employed as a forest ranger under the Ciskei bantustan regime. It was widely known that he had kept his government-issue handgun after his retirement. This was why, the local leadership in the village informed me, I would be safe from possible rogue elements if I resided at his homestead.

I was immediately made to feel part of the Mkhaya homestead and, as a fictive adult son, was given my own room directly adjacent to the main house. One drawback of this otherwise rather favourable situation was that my meals were initially served to me in my room by one of the teenage granddaughters of the family. I realised right away that this meant that I was unlikely to get to know the family soon nor would I hear them talking about village news and daily goings-on. I realised that, over time, I would become more of a boarder (not unlike several young teachers from outside the village who rented rooms with local families), and would be cut off from a potentially rewarding social interaction with the family and their wider networks.

The intervention of an acquaintance, Mncebisi Dingela, greatly assisted me here, because within a week of my taking up residence, he arrived to check up on how I was doing. Having conducted rural research himself, he was sensitive to my needs and impressed on the Mkhaya family the necessity of me eating with them at all times and of my being drawn into their family, both for my own safety and so that I could begin to learn about people and issues in the village.

My stay at the Mkhaya homestead was not without problems, however, as the elderly Mrs. Mkhaya was very ill and died two months after I started living with the family. There was a suspicion that witchcraft was involved. An illegitimate daughter of Mr. Mkhaya, who had been living with the family to nurse Mrs. Mkhaya and to cook for the family, was summarily banished from the homestead by Mr. Mkhaya's daughter (who worked as a nurse in Whittlesea, a town about two hours' drive from Hamburg). This daughter then proceeded to employ a domestic worker-cum-cook from a neighbouring village to cook and clean for Mr. Mkhaya, his school-going grandchildren who lived in the homestead, and for me. Throughout my ten-month stay in Hamburg with the family, from October 2000 to the end of July 2001, I paid Mr. Mkhaya both a (by local standards, generous) monthly rent and a similarly generous contribution towards my subsistence costs.

Although Hamburg is only 1½ hours drive from my home in Grahamstown where my wife and daughter resided, I spent little time at home during this period. I was determined to conduct ‘proper’ anthropological fieldwork, which for me meant ‘total immersion’ in the research field with few distractions. My wife and daughter visited me in the village on a few occasions and met the Mkhaya family, as did my parents on one occasion when they passed Hamburg en route to Grahamstown. These visits helped to situate me within local social categories as a young married man with my own home and family, who was required to live in the village for a defined period so as to study my chosen topic of interest at first hand.

Before moving to Loverstwit, I enquired about a place to stay in the village. I was directed to the homestead of Mr. Kholisile Mgaba, his wife *MaRadebe* and their children, who very graciously accommodated me in their home. I resided there for the three months (beginning September to the end of November 2001) that I conducted fieldwork in Loverstwit. I was given my own room in their house and was regarded as an older brother to the children. I grew to be close to this devoutly Christian family in the short period I stayed with them.

I remain permanently indebted to all the people I have mentioned for their many kindnesses and amazing generosity of spirit. Needless to say, my understanding of both of these villages was mediated by what the young people who assisted me, my hosts and the wider circle of key and occasional informants I came into contact with, chose to reveal to me about themselves, their own lives and those of their fellow-villagers. The ethnography I have subsequently assembled constitutes an attempt to ‘construct understanding from the constructed native’s constructed point of view’ (Crapanzano 1986: 74; Gudeman 2001: 5). I recognise that my understanding of everyday life in rural Peddie District remains a partial one and I concur with Schumaker’s (2001: 50) observation that ‘one of the few certainties... [is] that social facts are constructed out of fragile human observations and that truth is always contested and contestable’ (see Walker 1990a: 6-7).

This sense of a partial perspective is accentuated in my case, as I chose, after identifying high mobility as a feature of the lives of many of the people in Peddie District, nevertheless not to ‘follow’ any of my informants, or their relatives, to the

urban places where many of them lived and sought employment at various times in their adult lives. Ferguson (1999: 64) points out that this is what 'village-level studies' miss and inevitably suffer from as a result (see Englund 2002).

Precisely what challenges people face in towns and cities in the region and how these affect the decisions they make regarding their homes in the countryside, are things that therefore remain speculative here (cf. Murray's [2002] 'dispersed intensive' method of studying spatially dispersed social networks and people's geographically 'stretched' livelihoods). However, in defence of this decision, I was aware that many of the people from the area in which I conducted my fieldwork had strong links with East London (some 80 kilometres away) and I was fortunate to be able to tap into the stimulating anthropological research conducted by Leslie Bank and his colleagues in East London (see Bank 1997b, 2001, 2002a; Bank & Qambata 1999). In many ways, Bank's ethnographic output, which has built on the rich legacy of the Mayers, Pauw and Reader (authors of the highly regarded 'Xhosa in Town' trilogy), complements my work by offering an alternative 'view from the city' on many of the same issues.

The fieldwork context: Peddie District ca. 2001

Peddie District, known locally as *Ngqushwa*, is situated in the central part of the Eastern Cape Province. The district comprised an area of 1,760 km² and is situated between the Great Fish and Keiskamma Rivers. It is flanked in the south and east by the Indian Ocean (see Map 2). It is significant for my analysis that prior to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, Peddie was one of eight districts that comprised the nominally 'independent' Ciskei bantustan (Switzer 1993).

Peddie District is a semi-arid area with a dominant summer rainfall. It is, however, prone to severe periodic droughts. Rainfall tends to be erratic in quantity and distribution, which greatly increases the inherent risks to low-input dryland crop farming. Rainfall increases from west to east and the coastal parts of the district receive up to 700 mm of rainfall per annum. The drier interior receives 500 mm per annum, while as little as 400 mm per annum of rainfall occurs in the Great Fish River valley (De Lange *et al.* 1994: 5). The eight-year period from 1994 to 2002 (excluding

1999), was one of above average annual rainfall across the district – the so-called ‘Mandela rains’ – which, while they had little impact on arable production, gave renewed impetus to livestock-farming (*Daily Dispatch* 12 July 2003).¹⁴ Mean monthly maximum temperatures range from 22°C in June to 30°C in February. Winter temperatures are generally mild and seldom fall below 0°C. The coastal areas are frost-free while inland areas of the district experience between 15 and 30 days of frost per year (Ainslie 1998: 48).

Soils in the drier interior of the district are infertile, dispersive and unstable, with an extreme phosphorus deficiency (Ainslie *et al.* 1995). Closer to the coast, however, the soils are deeper, sandier and more fertile so that dryland field cultivation becomes a (somewhat) more viable proposition. The households with access to arable land, which still make use of these lands, plant them to maize, melons, beans and other vegetable crops. Pineapples are one noteworthy labour-intensive cash crop that has been grown intermittently over the years with some success on commercial estates in Peddie South, first by white farmers and later by the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation (CAC). At the time of my fieldwork, pineapple production had commenced again with government and private sector support, with a view to stimulating the local economy and providing much-needed employment to rural people in this area.

During the period 1977-1993, the more fertile alluvial soils of the mid-Great Fish River valley were utilised for the cultivation of cotton, vegetables and later maize under irrigation, although not without considerable ecological and institutional difficulties.¹⁵ In the pockets of alluvial soils along the middle reaches of the Keiskamma River, citrus estates that previously enjoyed state support proved to be a moderate success after privatisation. On the whole, given its topography, soils and rainfall, the largest part of the district was best suited to extensive livestock production, particularly of cattle and goats, on natural rangeland (Loxton *et al.* 1979; Steyn 1988). However, with the widespread abandonment of dryland arable

¹⁴ The weather station at Chiselhurst in East London (about 100km east-northeast of the town of Peddie) has a 90-year average annual rainfall of 864mm. The annual rainfall recorded at this station were: 1995: 983mm, 1996: 918mm, 1997: 965mm, 1998: 1,023mm, 1999: 859mm, 2000: 1,089mm, 2001: 1,084mm and 2002: 1,064mm (*Daily Dispatch* 12 July 2003).

¹⁵ The Tyefu Irrigation Scheme was established at great cost to help give the Ciskei bantustan a semblance of a viable agriculture sector and to employ some of the black people forcibly removed across the Great Fish River under apartheid removals (Holbrook 1998).

cultivation from the early 1970s, bush encroachment of the palatable sweet-thorn (*Acacia karoo*) increased the suitability of the vegetation to goats, since this bush was well-suited to the browsing habits of goats. On the other hand, invasive karroid shrubs that were unpalatable to livestock, principally 'blue bush' (*Pteronia incana*), became a serious problem (Fabricius 1997).

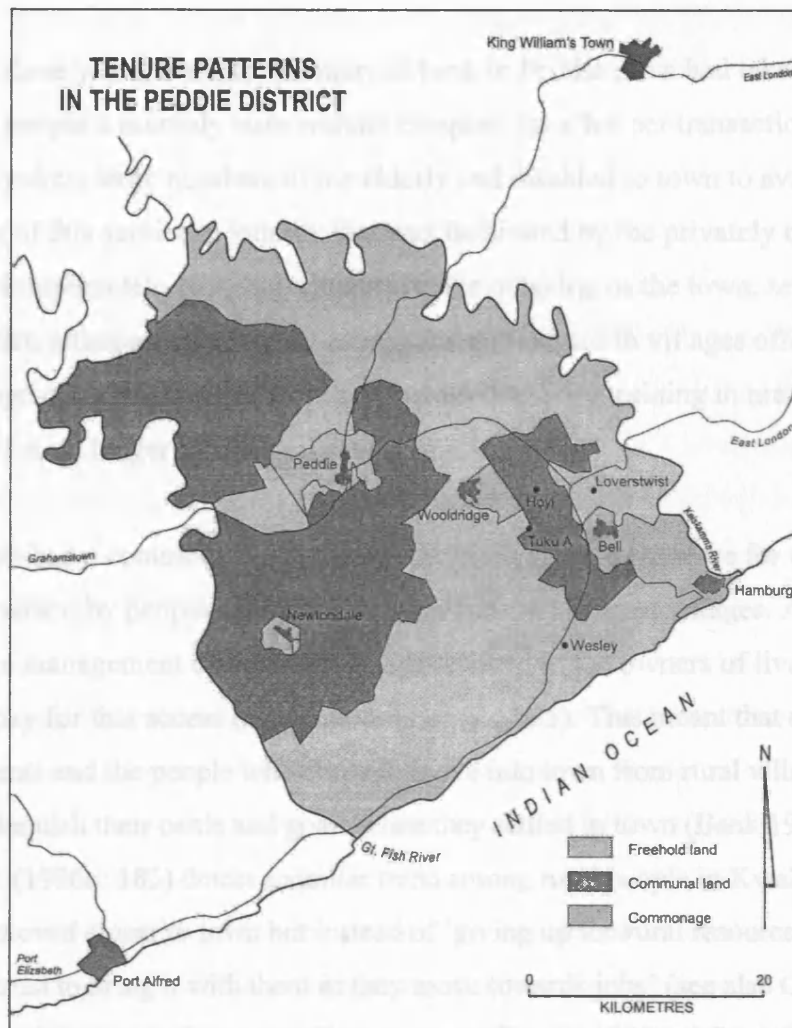
Spatial geographies and some demographic features of Peddie District

Prior to the nation-wide re-demarcation of district and municipal boundaries that took place in 1999, Peddie District consisted of two 'proclaimed towns', 68 villages (many of them in the eight 'Locations') and some 60 freehold farms.¹⁶ The town of Peddie, which contained a resident population of about 6,000 people, straddled the N2 national road. This road extended eastwards from Cape Town through to Durban, along the east coast of South Africa, and was the most important route traversing the Eastern Cape Province.

Following a period (1975-1994) characterised mostly by economic decay under the Ciskei bantustan regime, the small town of Peddie had regained some of its pre-1975 status as a focal point for local economic activity, especially in the administrative and service sectors. Home to the only bank and post office in the district, it partially fulfilled the role of commercial service hub for Peddie District and offered a locally significant number of white-collar employment opportunities, especially in the district offices of government departments. As a result, the spatial boundaries of the town of Peddie had expanded to virtually encompass some of the adjacent villages. This was the result of the increase in 'informal' housing, constructed by a steady influx of people (Manona *et al.* 1996; Cross 2001). Peri-urban settlements occurred close to the main roads leading into and from the town. This was a testimony to the economic pull of small towns like Peddie, even though until very recently the town lacked basic services such as a domestic water supply and electricity (Manona *et al.* 1996).

¹⁶ Renamed Ngqushwa Municipality by the Municipal Demarcation Board in 1999, it consisted of 2,246 km², as opposed to 1,760 km². An additional 32,000 people living in 44 villages that formerly fell under Zwelitsha District, were incorporated into the municipality. In 2002, the estimated total population of Ngqushwa Municipality was 93,997 people, living in 20,757 households (Ngqushwa Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2002: 26).

Map 2: Tenure patterns in Peddie District, ca. 1981.¹⁷



In the early 1990s, many of the residents of the new Peddie Extension who moved in from more distant villages in the district were attracted by the increased chances of securing some form of employment in town, especially in informal trading, as well as the banking and better transport and communication services, health, social welfare and police services. Not all such mobility should be seen as voluntary, however, and as Cross points out for KwaZulu-Natal Province, the significant mobility of rural households is often characterised by 'crisis moves' that occur in response to

¹⁷ Both the forced resettlement and voluntary migration of people considerably increased the number of villages and the population sizes of existing villages in the coastal areas of Peddie District from around 1978.

politically inspired violence, job market failure and the search for better infrastructure and services (Cross 2001).

In the past three years, the sole commercial bank in Peddie town had taken on the job of cashing people's monthly state welfare cheques, for a fee per transaction. This consistently drew large numbers of the elderly and disabled to town to avail themselves of this service, a journey that was facilitated by the privately owned taxi business. Nompumelelo Hospital, situated on the outskirts of the town, served the entire district, although a number of clinics and sub-clinics in villages offered a limited range of health services. The hospital used to offer training in nursing science, but by 2001 it no longer did so.

Peddie town had a commonage which was the main grazing resource for the cattle and goats owned by people who lived in town and the adjacent villages. A breakdown in the management of the commonage resulted in the owners of livestock not having to pay for this access (Higginbottom *et al.* 1995). This meant that existing town residents and the people who chose to move into town from rural villages did not have to relinquish their cattle and goats when they settled in town (Bank 1997b: 23). Cross *et al.* (1996b: 183) detect a similar trend among rural people in KwaZulu-Natal who have moved closer to town but instead of 'giving up the rural resource economy, they have tried to bring it with them as they move towards jobs' (see also Cross 2001; For a contrasting case in Gaborone, Botswana, see Krüger 1998; cf. Potts 2000).

The other, far smaller 'urban settlement' is Hamburg, situated at the mouth of the Keiskamma River. It had grown slowly from its origins in 1858 as a German settler village. Along with Wooldridge, Bell, Bodiam and German Village, Hamburg was founded to set the German mercenaries who had fought for the British in the Crimean War up as small farmers. The 'urban' status of Hamburg was an anachronism, since its currently dilapidated infrastructure hardly qualified it to be called an urban centre (Cook 1980: 35). Rather, this status was based on its having had its own 'village board' (later municipality) and its own commonage for much of the twentieth century. This distinguished it from neighbouring villages and essentially served its 'white' residents and holiday-makers who patronised this attractive, if rustic, holiday destination. This status brought many more local employment prospects than were

available in neighbouring villages of equivalent size, and over the years attracted a Xhosa-speaking population, which numbered about 1,500 people, to the area.

By far the majority (as many as 95%) of the people in Peddie District resided in the rural villages of the district or, at least, had their *imizi* [permanent homes] there (Ngqushwa IDP 2002: 24).¹⁸ At first glance, this accounted for the rural and apparently agrarian character of the district. But the stagnant local economy that characterised Peddie District for most of the second half of the 20th century made for poor local employment opportunities, and thus high population rural-urban mobility. The fact that the district was situated between the major employment centres of Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage (some 200 kms away) and King William's Town/East London (50-100 kms) meant that people in Peddie District were extremely well located to develop a range of 'rural-urban linkages' with these centres (Manona *et al.* 1996; Bank 2001; De Wet & Holbrook 1997).

High mobility among the local population was not without precedent though, as long-distance labour migration to distant mines or industries on the Witwatersrand and the Orange Free State was undertaken by people (mostly men) from Peddie District from the turn of the 20th century (Bundy 1988). What is significant, though, was that as early as the mid-twentieth century these long-distance migrant routes were being replaced by employment (both of both men and of women) in the provincial port cities of East London and Port Elizabeth and in Cape Town (Mayer 1980b: 48ff). Furthermore, the trend since the early 1970s, at least for those people with the requisite education and qualifications, had been to take up the even more localised (if labour unfriendly) employment opportunities on offer in the 'border industries' set up in Zwelitsha, Dimbaza and Berlin (Manona 1980a: 185-187; Mager 1989). During the 1980s, as the Ciskei bantustan bureaucracy underwent rapid expansion, white collar work in the Ciskei capital, Bisho, and district administrative towns provided further opportunities for employment and upward mobility for a somewhat wider section of the local population (De Wet & Holbrook 1997; Leibbrandt & Sperber 1997).

¹⁸ Some of these 'villages' were concentrated settlements of some 1,000 households, others had less than 70 households. Overall there was no settlement hierarchy, i.e. nodal settlements with superior infrastructure and facilities, to speak of in the district (Ngqushwa IDP 2002: 25).

Bank (1997b:25) makes the compelling argument that, in the absence of a clear urban hierarchy in the Eastern Cape, people do not gradually 'move on' to the next biggest and more economically active town or city. Instead they become 'trapped within stagnant pools on the fringes of [economically] depressed towns. Rather than seeking out better opportunities [through long-distance, perhaps permanent migration to urban centres], [many of them] spread their risks by circulating between urban and rural places within the same locality'. This risk-averse behaviour, which remains a feature of many parts of the Eastern Cape, rests not least on many people's poor educational qualifications that put a brake on their upward mobility. These factors ensure that, while the local economy has remained stagnant, there has been a constant and significant flow of people, resources and information between town and country throughout the Eastern Cape Province for a number of decades.

Demographic features of Peddie District were reminiscent of the overall situation in the rural former bantustan areas. As many as 52% of the total population of Ngqushwa Municipality (a larger area which included Peddie District) consisted of children between the ages of 0 and 19 years. A further 11% of the population was over the age of 60. Labour outmigration by men continued to affect the sex ratio in the district, with 47% of the total population male and 53% female. However, this mismatch was especially noticeable in the age groups older than the 30 years of age, with a 39% male and 61% female ratio the mean for the five age categories (i.e. 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69 and 70+). Women-headed households constituted 52% of the households in the municipality (Ngqushwa IDP 2002).

Agrarian change and conflicts over resources in Peddie District

Land-holding in Peddie District is an artefact of the colonial and apartheid-era confiscation of land, the racialised overlordship and the radically skewed ownership of productive land in the Eastern Cape. Prior to 1818, the present-day Peddie District was occupied primarily by the *amaNdlambe* Xhosa and *amaGqunukhwebe* people, the latter also Xhosa-speakers. During the 'Frontier War' of 1818-1819, these Xhosa people were driven out of this area and an uninhabited buffer area between white settlers and Xhosa-speakers was declared by the Cape governor, Charles Somerset (Peires 1981: 79).

With the relocation of the 'refugee' *amaMfengu* ['Fingo' people] from Gcalekaland (east of the Great Kei River) to Peddie District in 1834, land was set aside by the Cape Governor D'Urban for the establishment of six locations under communal tenure and two mission stations (Manona 1980b; Webster 1991).¹⁹ D'Urban's strategy was that the *amaMfengu* would serve the colony as a buffer against the 'marauding and cattle-rustling' Xhosa peoples. To draw the *amaMfengu* into the colonial economy, an annual hut tax of ten shillings per hut was imposed in their locations as early as 1848 (Switzer 1993: 93).

From 1849, grants of land in Peddie District were made to white settlers, both Dutch-speaking - who were given land along the middle and lower reaches of the Keiskamma River - and English-speaking settlers. The English-speakers were given farms in the central and eastern portions of Peddie District, which constituted the best agricultural areas of the district (Bullock 1960: 28). White farmers were deliberately interspersed among the 'natives', in order to 'educate' the latter in more advanced European methods of farming.²⁰ By 1854, there were 8,688 people resident in the area that would become known as Peddie District (Lewis 1984: 245).

By the late 1860s, some mostly *Mfengu* Xhosa-speaking peasants had begun to establish themselves as successful transport riders and entrepreneurs and a few were able to purchase small farms under freehold title in the district, where they successfully turned their hand to farming (Bundy 1988). One hundred years later, however, thanks to the Land Acts (1913 and 1936) and the apartheid policy of 'black-spot' removals, as much as 50% of the land in the district was in the hands of white farmers under freehold title. The major share of the balance, i.e. the 'reserved areas', was held in trust by the state which delegated the responsibility for managing the resources thereon to local authorities (see Ainslie [1998: 33-41] for a detailed discussion on 'modified communal tenure' in the Eastern Cape). A small number of black owners of freehold land were still on the land (see Bundy 1988). The result was low population density on this white-owned, commercially farmed land and a far higher concentration of Xhosa people in the locations that were 'reserved' for African occupation.

¹⁹ These same areas of Peddie District were 'scheduled' for the exclusive occupation and ownership by Africans in the Natives' Land Act of 1913.

²⁰ Thus ushering in the functional interdependence of black and white people in Peddie District and the surrounding districts that has carried right through to the present time.

For well over one hundred years, resources in the reserve areas were utilised by local residents under the eye of the headmen, chiefs and native commissioners (later magistrates). Since the early 1990s, this role has supposedly been taken up by the non-statutory, village-level residents' associations. In earlier decades, residential sites and arable allotments were held and controlled by individuals (historically only by men and widows with certain conditions) who had exclusive usufruct rights to these resources as long as they resided in the village and paid their taxes. The rights to arable land could be inherited but not sold, thus effectively preventing the emergence of a stratum of rich peasants. Significantly, grazing resources for livestock and other natural resources were held in common in that every person who was a recognised member of a particular village 'community' had rights of access to the grazing resources of that village (De Wet 1987a: 461). By the 1940s, as with other Ciskeian reserve areas, the reserves of Peddie District were experiencing chronically high people-to-land ratios, deteriorating agrarian conditions and growing pressure on natural resources. Although in principle every (married male) person still had the right to residential and arable land, access to arable land was increasingly denied by the growing scarcity of land throughout the Ciskeian reserves (De Wet 1987a: 460).

The crumbling agrarian system, already highly reliant on inputs that were sourced through migrant labour, was struck a further blow when the severe drought of 1945 decimated livestock herds in the reserve areas of the Ciskei (Mager 1999). From the late 1950s, landlessness was further accentuated by the arrival of large numbers of former tenant workers and farm labourers, who were pushed off white-owned farms as farming operations in Peddie and neighbouring districts were increasingly capitalised and mechanised (see Charton 1980b: 229; Manona 1988a). The fact that the various discrete reserve areas were hemmed in on all sides by white-owned farms precluded any expansion of the area available for human settlement or for grazing and cultivation and the extraction of key natural resources.

As if land ownership and land use had not already been sufficiently politicised in the countryside, from the 1940s the state responded to the increasingly visible signs of natural resource degradation in the reserves by implementing a programme of 'Betterment Planning' (De Wet 1995a; Beinart 1984; Vetter 2003). This entailed

replanning local land parcels and their subsequent demarcation, division and re-allocation into separately fenced-off residential, arable and common grazing areas. This meant that many already-poor rural homesteads had to relocate to the area set aside for a block-plan residential settlement.

One particularly odious element of the programme for rural people was that the notional 'carrying capacity' of grazing resources in each area was determined by agricultural planners. Any livestock deemed to be in excess of the carrying capacity were to be culled or sold and the owners compensated for their loss (De Wet 1995a; Mager 1992). Henceforth, a limit was placed on the number of cattle each household could own and grazing fees were to be collected. Bank and Qambata (1999: 15-17) note that the implementation of betterment in Mooiplaas near East London in 1958 entailed the imposition of a limit of 10 cattle per household. This was viewed by local people as an unwarranted attack by the state on one of their last remaining avenues of accumulation in the decaying agrarian economy. The move was so vigorously resisted that government officials were reluctant to follow through with it and the practice was later abandoned (Beinart 2003; Mager 1999).

The reserve areas of Peddie District were subjected to these 'Betterment Planning' schemes in the 1950s and 1960s, in the face of vehement opposition in some areas. In the *eMazizini* area in Peddie South, two chiefs were murdered by villagers because they had agreed to the implementation of betterment, apparently without adequate consultation with local residents (Mzozoyana 1995a). But only the residents of Tyefu Location, an agriculturally marginal and already heavily eroded area, with the political support of Port Elizabeth-based members of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), managed to mobilise local residents and resist the implementation of betterment (Mager 1999; Ainslie 1998). As a result, Tyefu Location consists of eleven dispersed villages, which each retain the sprawling, '*Nguni*' settlement plan with loosely defined and mostly unfenced grazing areas. The opposition to the erection of fencing by local authorities that would demarcate discrete livestock grazing camps for each village stemmed from the fact that no single village had sufficient year-round grazing resources to meet the needs of all the livestock in the village. However, in the absence of institutional controls, fences or herdsman, the lack of formal grazing management consistently made it more difficult for individual livestock-owners to

improve cattle production through selective breeding, improved animal health regimes or enhanced forage provision strategies (see Ainslie 1999; cf. Cross *et al.* 1996b).²¹

In the run-up to the ‘independence’ of the Ciskei bantustan in 1981, all freehold farms under white ownership were expropriated. Under apartheid legislation, no white South Africans were permitted to own land in the ‘independent’ Ciskei bantustan. The white farmers were compensated by the state and their farms were taken over by the South African Development Trust (SADT), for incorporation into the Ciskei bantustan. Simultaneously, considerable numbers of Xhosa-speaking people were removed from ‘common’ South Africa and forcibly resettled into the Ciskei, mostly just prior to its taking ‘independence’ in 1981 (Surplus People’s Project [SPP] 1983: 312ff; Manona *et al.* 1996: 13). Some of these people were resettled on previously white-owned farms in Peddie District and were placed under the nominal control of headmen and chiefs. Here they frequently came into conflict with the people who had previously been employees of the white farmers and who were still resident on these farms now ‘consolidated’ into the Ciskei.

The resettlement of people onto these farms effectively ‘recommunalised’ large areas of land that had been under freehold tenure for 130 years. In Peddie District alone, the forced removals of ‘black spots’ and resettlement of this period saw several thousand families forced to re-establish their homes as best they could in the already overcrowded and impoverished reserve areas. At the government-established resettlement camps at Glenmore, Kama’s Kraal, Zweledinga, Bell and Bingqala, many people (4,500 in Glenmore alone) had to endure years of considerable hardship and, under threat of further resettlement, uncertainty about their futures (Manona *et al.* 1996: 14). Those who had brought livestock with them often had to watch helplessly as their livestock succumbed to adverse weather conditions, previously unknown diseases and unfamiliar poisonous plant species (MacLennan 1987).

²¹ Prompted by concerns over the spread of bovine diseases and stock-theft, the state was also more vigorous in its attempts to enforce the existing legislation which restricted the movement of cattle out of the reserves. By slowing down the sale of livestock into and out of the ‘locations’, these controls over the movement of livestock restricted agrarian economic activity in the reserves and were widely resented (see Ainslie 2002c; Beinart 1997).

A contrasting pattern was exhibited by the defiant settlement of Loverstwest Farm by an assortment of mostly former farmworkers in the early 1980s. These people hailed from the neighbouring farming areas, and they did not fall under, nor did they readily recognise, the authority of chiefs or 'tribal authorities'. Some of them had been or were still resident on previously white-owned pineapple farms in Peddie South that had been consolidated into the Ciskei a few years earlier (Palmer 1997a: 91-92). From 1985, most of these farmworkers were forced to make way when these farms were consolidated again to form the Ciskei National Ranch and the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation (CAC)-managed pineapple estates. By then, a few households of displaced farmworkers had settled by stealth on the farm of Loverstwest, setting up their shacks among the trees. The farm was being used by CAC to fatten oxen bought in the villages prior to resale. Following the overthrow of President-for-Life Lennox Sebe in 1989, farmworker families invaded in numbers and squatted on the farm, resisted removal and demanded that they be provided with services such as water and electricity.

Although their settlement was subsequently planned and officially acknowledged by the Ciskeian authorities, they continued to have a troubled relationship with the nearby village of Tuku A, which was the seat of the *amaRhaule* Tribal Authority. The people of Tuku A accused the residents of Loverstwest of encroaching on their grazing and arable lands and consistently threatened to drive them out of the area by force.

The broader Ciskei political machinations engendered considerable discord on the ground. In all cases of resettlement that took place around the district, whether state-led or 'spontaneous', competition for resources within existing villages and with neighbouring communities was fierce and gave rise to physical confrontations and sporadic violence (Manona 1980b; Andrew & Wotshela 1994). In many parts of the district, previously white-owned freehold farms were leased to 'emerging' black farmers, who were promised first option to buy the farms in future. In several cases, the presence of these farmers, only some of whom were originally from Peddie District, caused serious resentment among neighbouring villagers. This was because the impoverished residents of adjacent villages had made use of the natural resources on these farms and also illegally removed farm infrastructure, such as fencing, since the departure of the white farmers (Ainslie 1998). Overall, it would be fair to say that

by the early 1990s the regulatory mechanisms that controlled resource use in this modified system of communal tenure had largely fallen away and the controls presided over by ANC-aligned, village-based residents' associations, where such controls exist at all, were enforced in a far more *ad hoc* fashion (Ainslie 1998).

The upshot of this marked degree of contestation over access to agricultural and natural resources was a generally low level of investment of time and money in agrarian production at the household level. The relatively high risk of theft of one's crops or dispossession through land invasions of one's arable land meant that the cost of even basic agricultural infrastructure, such as fencing for the purposes of cultivation, was deemed by many to outweigh the potential benefits that might be gained from cultivation. For one thing, this situation contributed to the marked 'outward-orientation' in the livelihoods of most rural households in Peddie District, with people seeking to gain their livelihoods in urban-based employment or claiming entitlements from the state welfare economy. However, the existence of various, increasingly locally mediated, forms of communal tenure and resource management regimes, as well as the continued (if haphazard) provision of an animal health service by the state, meant that many rural people found it prudent to continue to invest in livestock. It was especially cattle which represented one viable accumulation strategy still open to them.

It is this complex and contested situation that forms the backdrop to my analysis in the chapters that follow. In the next chapter, I set out the theoretical considerations that inform my study of the 'cultural economics' of cattle-holding in rural Peddie District.

CHAPTER TWO

Understanding cattle-holding in the former bantustan areas of the Eastern Cape Province

Introduction

Since Herskovits' (1926) extended essay on the 'cattle complex', or the special regard in which cattle were held by many African peoples, debates have raged concerning what exactly this relationship between rural Africans and their cattle entails. To the extent that early structural-functionalist anthropologists showed cattle to be embedded in the web of social and economic relations that characterised African pastoralist groups, it was clear that cattle could not be equated with socially 'unshackled' things or goods, i.e. as commodities to be exchanged at will (see Hunter 1936; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Gulliver 1955).¹ Nor were the cattle held by Africans simply or necessarily the cultural, local or pre-colonial equivalent of cash. In fact, it was particularly the differences and the similarities between cattle and cash, with each having distinct, albeit ambiguous and contested, attributes, agencies and associations in local practice, that was to become a focus of attention in the broader anthropology of rural Africa (Bohannan 1959, 1968; Ferguson 1985, 1990; Comaroff & Comaroff 1990, 1991; Hutchinson 1996; Galaty & Sperling 1990).

Other early observers, policy-makers and colonial officials, given the task of governing rural Africans, were more inclined to point to the 'irrationality' inherent in the tenacity with which pastoralists were observed to hold onto their cattle, even in severely adverse conditions, such as prolonged drought (see Schneider 1984; Kerven 1992). The supposed preference of pastoralists for 'quantity over quality' in terms of the number of cattle they held and their consequent reluctance to market cattle came to be regarded as a significant factor in the degradation of the very rangelands on which their herds depended (see Hardin 1968; Behnke 1984).

¹ Here, I used the term 'pastoralist' to denote all people who actually keep and farm with cattle (and other livestock) and not only those who derive their exclusive or primary livelihoods from cattle keeping.

Mounting frustration in the 1960s and 1970s at the failure of numerous foreign donor-led 'pastoral development' interventions across sub-Saharan Africa led many commentators to draw on this stock of earlier characterisations of the 'African cattle complex' (Board 1960; cf. Scoones 1995; Simpson & Evangelou [eds] 1984). These arguments paralleled the debates in economic anthropology between the 'formalist' and the 'substantivists', with the latter, following Malinowski, rejecting the notion that native economies could be analysed and understood with the theoretical constructs and analytical tools of Western formal economic theory.

In the late 1960s, with the currency of the Marxist emphasis on the centrality of economic relations, analyses of the cattle sector shifted. Some observers of the African cattle sector sought to downplay the cultural (or extra-economic) dimensions of cattle-keeping and to argue instead for the intrinsic economic rationality of livestock-owning peoples. These analysts emphasised the considerable stream of non-monetary or 'subsistence' value contributed by cattle and cattle products to local pastoral economies (Fielder 1973). Others writers who were sympathetic to Frankian 'dependency theory' positions argued that pastoral peoples occupied a specific, structurally marginal position on the periphery of the global political economy. Within the periphery, adverse economic conditions such as depressed price levels, limited security of investments in the financial sector and relatively weak local demand for consumer goods all acted as strong disincentives to the conversion of livestock assets to cash in formal markets, unless exceptional circumstances dictated differently (Palmer & Parsons 1977).²

Thus adherents of dependency theory were able to easily explain why, for instance, 'rational' pastoralists could be expected to hold onto their cattle during the most devastating of droughts. The poor condition of the animals and the low prices that prevailed in the oversupplied markets that typically accompanied extended periods of drought made it irrational to exchange them for cash. Moreover, these livestock markets were structurally unfree and characterised by various health and other controls that prejudiced rural cattle-herders. From the herders' point of view, it was worth holding onto their animals in drought situations because they never knew when

² The central tenets of these arguments still inform much of the current debates around pastoral development and rangeland management in southern Africa (see Cousins 1996,1999; Ainslie [ed.] 2002).

the drought would break. If it broke before their herds were depleted, there was a distinct possibility that they would be able to rebuild their herds. This was particularly the case in situations where pastoralists were living under different forms of communal tenure, as their overhead costs were generally low and herd recovery could commence almost immediately after the first rains and the subsequent increase in available forage.

Economic anthropology has moved away from these seemingly sterile debates. Questions are no longer posed about whether African pastoralists are rational or irrational beings. Instead, we appear to accept that what they think, do and say can sometimes be described as 'rational', and sometimes 'irrational', at least in a formal, economic sense, and that their thoughts, words and actions can best be understood by looking at the whole context of their lives and lived experience (Sharp 1985; Davis 1992).³ More recent anthropological forays into this field of study, such as those of Ferguson (1990) and the Comaroffs (1985, 1992) in southern Africa, Galaty & Johnson (1990) in East Africa, Hutchinson (1996) in the Sudan and Turkon (2003) in Lesotho, reflect both this more progressive approach and a somewhat disturbing, post-structuralist open-endedness.

I argue that these studies have contributed to a greater understanding of the multiple and simultaneous roles played by cattle in the construction and mediation of the social and the material worlds of African people. Most importantly, these studies shift the emphasis from what Ferguson has identified as stubborn 'linear metanarratives of emergence and progress...of imagined teleologies of the modern' with their implicit, ethnocentric hierarchies, to focus instead on the disjuncture, fragmentation and global disconnectedness that are experienced by many African people in their daily lives (Ferguson 1999: 16-17,23).

In his earlier work, which owed much to Murray (1981a) and Sansom (1974), Ferguson (1985) argued convincingly that the 'bovine mystique' which surrounds (most of) the cattle held by Basotho people is not primordial but is in fact constructed

³ While virtually no-one argues nowadays that different groups of human beings are 'wired' differently in cognitive terms, social practices can be shown to deviate from 'formalist' models of economic rationality in all social groups (see Davis [1992] for some intriguing examples).

and continuously (re)vitalised, primarily by senior men. As long-term labour migrants on the mines in neighbouring South Africa, these men have found cattle to be a most suitable good in which to invest their savings, and thereby render the latter relatively immune to pressures from the claims of spouses and close kin. Cattle are well suited to shoring up their status and authority, that is, to ‘stand in’ for them in the rural setting from which they are largely absent during the course of their adult working lives.

In a paper that is highly relevant to my study, Bank’s (1997a) analysis of the emergence of rural entrepreneurs in the tiny *Qwaqwa* bantustan of apartheid South Africa illustrates another crucial facet of the changing face of cattle-ownership. This is the negotiation of gender and class and the contested economic decision-making that takes place within the households that hold cattle and between these and other households without cattle, as both categories of household try to make sense of and engage with bigger changes in their social and economic situation (see also Hodgson [ed]. 2000; Anderson & Broch-Due [eds] 1999).

Bank skilfully unpacks the struggles and dilemmas that confronted the people faced with the realities of forced relocation into the bantustan from the 1950s, especially the increasingly dire shortages of land and the assault of the state on the cattle held by black South Africans. Some families opted to make the difficult switch from cattle holding to small-scale retailing (Bank 1997a: 190). They did this rather reluctantly given the iconic status of cattle, by shifting their material assets from livestock to ‘deadstock’ i.e. commerce. Ironically – particularly in light of the opposite response of the Tshidi Barolong (see below) – their motive for doing so, Bank argues, was to retain some measure of cultural and economic autonomy in the context of the oppressive apartheid political economy and seriously overcrowded conditions of the *Qwaqwa* bantustan (Bank 1997a: 186-193).

Bank contends that those men who successfully made this shift into rural business – in successive waves over an extended period and thus under changing material circumstances – did so because they were able to control and divert the labour of especially their female but also youthful household members, away from the domestic sphere and into their respective businesses (Bank 1997a: 194; cf. Guy 1990). They orchestrated this shift by innovatively portraying these enterprises as

‘imaginary herds’, which as collective resources at the household level were, on the one hand, subject to the claims of all household members, but on the other hand could legitimately demand the labour of household members for the care and increase of the ‘herd’.

At the same time, however, in disposing of their cattle and thus withdrawing in no uncertain terms from the social relations that were underpinned by cattle, these would-be businessmen opened themselves up to possible social ostracisation and even accusations of witchcraft from disaffected kin, affines and clansmen. Bank goes on to discuss the intricacies of how storekeepers tried alternately to (re)present their affiliations and identities and to disguise the by-definition profit-seeking nature of their enterprises, in ways that resonated with powerful undercurrents in local political discourses.

In their wide-ranging exposition of the cultural practices of the Tshidi Barolong, the Comaroffs contend that Tshidi ownership of cattle is part of a subjugated people’s resistance to the ‘corrupting’ influences of colonial and Western value systems or *segoa* (‘the ways of whites’). In this sense, cattle occupy a central place in Batswana consciousness, representing Tshidi attempts to ‘dam the corrosive flow of cash’ and to attenuate the impacts of Western cultural domination more generally (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991; see De Wet & McAllister 1983: 65). Cattle, the Comaroffs argue *pace* Evans-Pritchard, can be said to ‘lay a bridge between material conditions and collective meaning, between practical activity and its cultural construction’.

Thus cattle, in their capacity both as producers of material goods and as stores of cultural value, can be harnessed by social actors in at least two significant ways. As both the economic currency of projects of accumulation and potent symbols of wealth, cattle may feature strongly in domestic social and economic relations, helping to define the shifting sands of conjugal, gender and generational relations. At the same time, cattle can be – and indeed are – paraded as symbols of cultural difference writ large, allowing people to espouse their particular cultural identity and celebrate their way of life in the face of global economic and cultural influences emanating mostly from the dominant Euro-North American metropolitan centres.

For the purposes of my argument, it is the fact that these two streams are connected in the case of cattle held in Peddie District that is significant. The fact that cattle have a definite monetary value that can be realised through sale allows people some latitude both in the way they conceive of and plan their livelihood strategies and the ways in which they assert their cultural and individual identities in the face of the incessant push and pull of market forces (Gudeman 2001).

Hutchinson's (1996) superlative account of the struggles of the pastoral Nuer in strife-torn Sudan explores these intricate processes. She describes how the Nuer have struggled to come to terms with and to integrate into their social, cultural and linguistic universes the considerable and often catastrophic changes they have experienced over the past six decades. These changes have been brought about by war and the penetration of the cash economy, and have profoundly affected not only their cattle-keeping economy but also their social and ritual practices. This sort of rich and incisive ethnographic description and analysis provide a powerful antidote to the narrow, (political-) economic debates that take for granted the primacy of economic rationality and thus seek to tinker with the 'incentives' deemed necessary to minimise the social pressures that disable maximising pastoralists.

It is, however, worth keeping sight of the utility value of cattle, i.e. the fact that cattle provide rural people with direct gains in the form of goods and services, such as milk, draught power, manure, meat, hides, etc. that can and do make a considerable contribution to the livelihoods of rural people in general (Barrett 1992; Shackleton *et al.* 2001). These real economic goods, as well as the cultural and social goods into which they can be readily converted, provide important clues as to why rural people continue to keep cattle. The 'business' of constructing livelihoods and the extent to which these bovine-linked livelihoods are tied to agrarian resources more broadly, thus deserves close attention.

Anthropology in South Africa since the 1980s

In one way or another, the purported 'resistance' offered by colonised, oppressed African peoples has featured strongly in South African ethnography and historiography (Mayer 1980b; Bundy 1988). This emphasis emerged in both the

Marxist and 'social history' analyses of the mid-1970s and 1980s (see Murray, M. 1996; Beinart & Bundy 1987).⁴ Ideas about the writing of a new 'history from below' (see, among others, Wolf [1982] and Scott [1985]) also filtered into debates and practice within a divided South African anthropology.⁵ Throughout the late 1970s and the 1980s, the discipline in South Africa was increasingly isolated from international debates, although there has been some recent discussion about the actual extent and impact of this isolation (Hammond-Tooke 1997). At the same time, practitioners responded to strident calls for more 'relevant' local anthropological analyses that would make an intellectual contribution to the struggle against apartheid (McAllister 1997; Kiernan 1997: 59; Mafeje 1996, 1997). The main response from South African-based (as opposed to foreign-based), mostly 'white' anthropologists was to engage in what has been termed 'exposé anthropology' (Gordon and Spiegel 1993: 89; Fry 1992). This meant conducting studies which for the most part sought to expose and document the trauma and material deprivations experienced by black South Africans as a result of the workings of the apartheid system. In this regard, the migrant labour system and its effects came in for particularly harsh and sustained criticism.

However, the limitations of this approach quickly became evident. The underlying assumption about the exceptionality of apartheid generally made for narrowly bounded, empirical studies. These were often consciously non-comparative, even parochial in their scope, although they also contained generally sensitive historical accounts and for the most part strove to take cognisance of current theoretical trends. As the anti-apartheid struggle deepened in the 1980s, it continued to hold the virtually unassailable moral high ground internationally. It was considered morally and politically suspect for anthropologists to deviate from the good, if increasingly intellectually stultifying, cause of critically challenging the apartheid state in their work (Murray, M. 1996: 13; McAllister 1997: 2).

⁴ Glaser (2001: 166) suggests that '[r]adical historians [of South African history] developed their expanded definition of resistance partly to counterbalance top-down historical accounts focusing exclusively on heroic episodes and leaders, but also, at least arguably, to sidestep the uncomfortable facts of conservatism and quiescence in the black population'.

⁵ The discipline in South Africa has somewhat simplistically been portrayed as bifurcated into a social anthropology, taught mostly at English-medium universities, with strong links to the Durkheimian theoretical traditions of British social anthropology, and the *volkekunde* (ethnology), taught at Afrikaans-medium universities that takes up an extreme Boasian position of cultural relativism and sees each culture as bounded and unique (Gluckman 1975; Kuper 1988; Kiernan 1997; Gordon & Spiegel 1993: 84-7; cf. Hammond-Tooke 1997).

The turn to neo-Marxist theoretical models from the early 1970s was a further confounding factor in the analysis of cultural difference within South African society. Apartheid was not exceptional, Marxist theorists argued, but was instead a variation of the capitalist exploitation theme, a 'racialized super-exploitation' of the African majority in the interests of the white minority and international capital (Magubane 1979). This approach emphasised the concept of class in social analyses and theorising (Glaser 2001: 110ff). The pursuit of any fresh intellectual developments, such as the renewed global interest in ethnicity (not to mention post-modernism) in the late 1980s, did not sit well with the dominant materialist and 'resistance' approaches, although there were exceptions (see Gordon & Spiegel 1993: 89; Comaroff & Comaroff 1991; 1992; Wilmsen & McAllister [eds.] 1996).⁶

Overall, there was thus very little intellectual space for critical analyses of concepts such as culture and tradition. In fact, many anthropologists reasoned that, by studying these concepts and thereby recognising their use and potency, they would simply play into the apartheid state's plans for the balkanisation of South Africa (Beinart & Dubow 1995:17; Spiegel & Boonzaier 1988; Kuper 1986: 3). 'Culture' was a key concept in the rhetoric of the apartheid state, and in choosing to challenge and deconstruct this rhetoric on its own terms, i.e. in the context of the South African experience, many anthropologists failed to adequately widen their critique through comparative and historical analyses (but see Boonzaier & Sharp [eds.] 1988). Indeed, if anthropology was struggling to cast off its label as the 'handmaiden of colonialism' (Asad [ed.] 1973), then a small band of 'progressive' South African anthropologists (certainly in the period 1976-1990) were adamant that their discipline was not to be labelled the 'handmaiden of apartheid' (Beinart & Dubow 1995: 18; see critique in Murray 1981b).

Inhabiting as we do the promised land of the 'new' South Africa, which is still very much under construction, what comparative ethnographic insights might anthropologists bring to bear on our understanding of the post-apartheid society and its place in the global ecumene? Kiernan (1997: 61-2) argues that it is time for

⁶ The work of Jean Comaroff (1985) and the Comaroffs (1991, 1992) among the Tshidi Barolong, treated native 'resistance' to the 'money economy' and to 'white ways' more generally in a far more sophisticated fashion, and included nuanced analyses of identity and meaning construction that were previously neglected.

anthropologists to move beyond the caricature of indigenous peoples as the dispossessed *victims* and to begin instead to look at issues of agency and at how people cope or 'get on' with the business of living and making sense of their worlds. He asks rhetorically whether it can

be that the economically impoverished are not only being consumed by an iniquitous system but, in some other sense, are actively consuming it and, in the process of consumption, are actually transforming it.

He notes, echoing a growing trend in anthropology, that 'ordinary people [sic]...are not lacking in cultural resources or in the capacity to resist the meanings which dominant others impose on events and to impress their own meanings on what is happening to them' and proposes the study of this area as a new way forward in South African anthropology (Kiernan 1997: 62).

As McAllister argues, 'the question is how to both theorise and operationalise the reintroduction of [the concept of] culture' into the analyses that anthropologists construct to explain particularly the continuities of social practices in post-apartheid South Africa (McAllister 1997: 3). At issue is the need for a rejuvenated critical South African anthropology to develop fresh, plausible explanations of the nature and significance of both the continuities and hybridities that exist in the diverse cultural practices in the country. These include people's everyday lives and the extraordinary practices (such as ritual practices and ethnically marked rites of passage), that have survived and even flourished, albeit in modified forms, into the post-apartheid period.

'Getting by': Cattle production as practice

In his discussion of the objectification that characterises all anthropological inquiry, Bourdieu (1990) shows how the outside observer, lacking the practical, tacit mastery of the cultural forms s/he observes, substitutes this with objectified, abstracted models. Thus for example, a model of kinship as a cognitively logical system of kin relations is posited as representing how the kinship system of the X people 'works'. This cognitive model, Bourdieu suggests, cannot but fail to encompass the essentially practical reality of kinship, as experienced by the people being observed (Bourdieu 1990: 34-5). The relationship between the two, he contends, is much the same as that which exists between a map which represents 'all the possible routes for all possible

subjects and a network of pathways that are really maintained and used, and are practicable for a particular agent.'

Bourdieu's simple example of the reified family tree (or genealogy) to demonstrate the difference between objectified understanding⁷ and practical logic, could serve as a model for understanding what Xhosa people who hold cattle in the rural Eastern Cape are 'doing'. In producing, exchanging and consuming cattle, they are not necessarily, or only, engaged in actions which are consciously rationalised or logical (in the way posited by, for instance, rational-choice theories). Rather, their practices may well stem from a different logic, the logic of tacit, embodied history, of acting on the world in a certain way because of an inculcated cultural conditioning or 'diffuse education' (Bourdieu 1990: 103). This practice has its own economy of logic and instrumentality (as well as symbolism and meaning), which is implicated in ensuring the success of social production and reproduction in its broadest sense (Bourdieu 1990: 95). 'Practice does not imply...', Bourdieu (1990: 11) argues, 'mastery of the logic that is expressed within it.'

Developing some of these insights in her influential study of the Marakwet of Kenya, Moore (1986: 8) points that

[m]eanings are not inherent in the organisation of domestic space, but must be invoked through the *activities of social actors*...the result is a theoretical approach that is less dependent on the anthropologists' models and more intimately related to the practical folk models of the social actors concerned [my emphasis].

This logic of practice, Bourdieu argues, means that, if called upon to explain their actions which until then were, for the most part, unreflexive, unconscious or self-evident and varying according to the situation, native agents may in fact resort to simple axioms such as 'this is the way we do things here'.⁸ In the process they 'leave unsaid all that [to them] goes without saying' (Bourdieu 1990: 91). Any consistency

⁷ Of course, people who are native to a culture also construct, modify and utilise partial and 'objectified' maps of their social universe, but these have the advantage of being grounded in life-long socialisation and practice.

⁸ In a recent documentary shown on South African television, *Qula Kwedini* (A Rite of Passage), about one youth's experience of undergoing the Xhosa male circumcision rite, the initiate's middle-aged, male ritual nurse was questioned about the origins of the ritual. His response went as follows: 'We grew up with this initiation. We came to it asking no questions. Our fathers didn't ask either about its origins. So we just stepped into their shoes and carried on' (Qubeka 2003; cf. Soga 1932: 295-6).

of local cultural forms that is observed by the outsider, Bourdieu contends, is a product of the partial coherence that the generative principles or schemas (*'habitus'*) 'derive from the structures of relations between the groups, the sexes or the generations, or between the social classes of which they are the product and which they tend to reproduce in a transformed, misrecognizable form, by inserting them into the structure of a system of symbolic relations' (Bourdieu 1990: 54, 95).

Bourdieu argues further that another, explicit and normative understanding or logic of social action exists among native agents because 'inculcation is never so perfect that a society can entirely dispense with all explicit statement'. 'Officialization', he contends, operates at the level of discourse in which 'a group (or those who dominate it) teaches itself and masks from itself its own truth...tacitly defining the limits of the thinkable and the unthinkable and so contributing to the maintenance of the social order from which it derives its power' (Bourdieu 1990: 107-108).

In arguing that even ritual or 'religious actions', for instance, are oriented towards the 'most dramatically practical, vital and urgent ends' that are 'totally present in the present', Bourdieu (1990: 95, 92) makes three telling observations that are especially pertinent to my study. They are that: (i) rituals and other cultural activities have a practical logic for the native agents which can never be fully understood or 'captured' by the objectifying observer in his/her abstract models, diagrams or numbers⁹; (ii) that by questioning agents about their practices, the ethnographer may lead them to speculate over that which, until that point, has been tacit or 'misrecognised', encouraging them to shape their responses 'in terms of a theory of practice that meshes with' the concerns, abstractions and specialisms which the observer brings to the fieldwork encounter. In the process, much may be left unsaid but, more importantly, any further prompting may lead the informant to resort to the 'ambiguous vocabulary of the rule' or the norm, 'the most codified aspect of tradition', to explain social practice which derives from principles of practical mastery, and (iii) that discourses of 'officialization' result in sets of 'authorized representations in which the group is willing to recognize itself' (Bourdieu 1990: 36, 108).

⁹ He wryly notes that 'nothing is more suspect than the ostentatious rigour of so many diagrams of social organization offered by anthropologists' (Bourdieu 1990: 85).

These constructed representations are a significant obstacle to the ethnographer's attempts to understand (and to interpret and communicate) the cultural practices of his/her informants. However, once these layers of analytical complexity are recognised by the ethnographer, it can be rewarding to subject such 'authorized representations' to intense critical scrutiny in order to uncover, for example, the sets of agents who are actively engaged in contesting, reinforcing or undermining the hegemony of these representations, in much the way that Long (1992b) advocates and Hutchinson (1996), for one, has attempted to do. Bourdieu's work offers sophisticated insights into the complex interplay of the forces that shape people's cultural practices and which give them a semblance of being a consistent and coherent 'system'. His insights are also highly apposite with respect to the practical dilemmas that confront the ethnographer – the 'aesthete trapped in the instant' – in his or her attempts to grasp and interpret particular aspects of a cultural 'system' (Bourdieu 1990: 19,67).

Bourdieu's theoretical innovations presage the '*Writing Culture*' (Clifford & Marcus [eds]. 1986) watershed in anthropology in several areas, not least in his 'ethnography of ethnography' which was so central to the later postmodernist deconstruction of the rational scientific method and its search for 'truth' (cf. Van Maanen 1995: 17; Van der Waal 1992; Clifford 1986). Bourdieu's contribution is also striking for his perceptive comparison of the textual reconstructions of the anthropologist with the philologist 'and his dead letters' (Bourdieu 1990: 36, 288 footnote 5), his penetrating analyses of the contextual 'symbolic violence' inherent in the ethnographic moment, and his recognition of the necessarily partial, abstracted nature of the interpretations of the observer (Bourdieu 1990: 69,80).

Bourdieu problematises to a remarkable degree but ultimately cannot resolve the insider/outsider methodological dilemma characteristic of sociological enquiry. His work can be criticised for the way in which symbolism and meanings, so important for him at a higher scale of analysis, are reduced at the level of the individual to culturally learned, historical and instrumental 'practical schemes' effected on the body, which prioritise the functionality, i.e. the 'maximum effectiveness for the effort expended...to [satisfy] vital material or symbolic interests' in any particular context of everyday life (Bourdieu 1990: 91). Bourdieu's sophisticated model nevertheless

moves way beyond the 'maximising rational actor' model of neo-classical economics, and he goes to considerable lengths to argue this point (see Bourdieu 1990: 50-54).¹⁰

The 'actor-oriented paradigm' of Norman Long provides insights into the diverse social practices that animate the development sector (Long 1992a, 1992b, 2001). Useful for my purposes is Long's adoption of an 'open-ended, ethnographic approach...to unravel the complexities of meaning and social action...[through] a conceptual framework which accords priority to the understanding of everyday life situations' (Long 1992a: 6). He insists that social actors are not simply 'disembodied social categories...or passive recipients of intervention but [are] active participants who process information and strategize in their dealings' with others. By combining an actor-oriented with a historical-structural approach, Long (1992b: 33) seeks to integrate 'the broad historical changes taking place in the regional and national arena, with a careful documentation of the micro-histories and strategies of individual [rural people]'. This is the approach which I have adopted in the chapters that follow. Long's (1992b: 34-35) observation that at the interface of development local groups 'actively formulate and pursue their own programmes of development', irrespective of the planned interventions carried out by external agents, is useful for my formulation of cattle development interventions, such as the Ciskei National Ranch (cf. May 1991; see Chapter Three).

At a different level, Long's actor-centred approach sheds light on how the dominance of neo-liberal narrative(s) of agrarian change in South Africa (referred to in my Introduction) has developed. This is the world in which constant struggles are waged over intellectual paradigms and languages, over influential university positions and institutional 'turf', where academic networks are policed and exclusions effected over institutional resources through the use of legitimising forms and tropes of knowledge and reputation (cf. Williams 1996; Hoben 1995; Bernstein 1996b; Roe 1991, 1995; Groenewald & Nieuwoudt 2003). Needless to say, this is the subject of another thesis.

¹⁰ He states that 'the economy described by economic theory is a particular case of a whole universe of economies' (Bourdieu 1990: 50).

The sociology of commodities: production, exchange and consumption

Having all but jettisoned pre-eminently neo-Marxist theoretical concerns with production, much recent theorising in economic anthropology emphasises either the exchange (Appadurai 1986; Thomas 1991; Hutchinson 1996) or the consumption (Miller 1995) of things (commodities) in developing our understanding of social practices, including those of people on the post-colonial fringe.¹¹ Appadurai signalled this break with his compelling analysis of commodities *qua* things, i.e. things that have economic value and that may be exchanged in contested systems, or ‘regimes of value’, in which value and exchange are mediated by political processes (Appadurai 1986: 4,6; cf. Douglas & Isherwood 1996[1979]).

In justifying this shift in analytical focus, Appadurai (1986: 6,37) argued that commodities are not the exclusive preserve nor the ‘typical material representations’ of the capitalist mode of production that Marx had once posited them to be. Instead, he argued that the commodity potential of all things (including gifts) requires a new emphasis which involved following the things themselves, through the ‘total trajectory from production, through exchange/distribution to consumption’. Recalling the French *filière vivrières* (or food commodity chain) approach, Appadurai labelled this a ‘biographical approach to things’ (Appadurai 1986: 13; see Bernstein 1996b).

Appadurai’s notion of the ‘social life of things’, while paying close attention to the changeable nature, and indeed agency, of commodities themselves, is directed primarily at what he calls the ‘politics of value’ (Appadurai 1986: 56). He points out that commodity circulation, and thus both exchange and consumption, is subject to both ‘social control and political redefinition’ in a number of ways (Appadurai 1986: 6,57; cf. Gudeman 2001).

Appadurai argues that the meanings of things are inscribed in ‘their forms, their uses, their trajectories’ and that, while it is people who inscribe or encode these meanings,

¹¹ I am not as comfortable with a wholesale jettisoning of what Marxists refer to as the ‘forces, means and relations of production’. It seems to me that where rural people still have direct physical and material involvement in activities of production – as opposed to those who, increasingly, exchange and consume (only) ready-fashioned commodities – the possibility remains that an analysis of this production will reveal ways in which such activity both reflects and informs cultural practices (see McAllister 2001: 12; Bernstein 1997: 8ff; Moore 1986).

it is to the ‘things-in-motion’ themselves, as much as to the transactions and exchanges of them, that we must turn in order to understand the human and social contexts in which they circulate (Appadurai 1986: 5; cf. Ferguson 1985). Appadurai’s singular contribution to the study of commodities has been to focus our attention on the commodity potential of things in three dimensions. These are (i) the temporal dimension or the commodity *phase*, which recognises the fact that things are able to move in and out of a commodity state; (ii) the conceptual dimension, or the commodity *candidacy* of things, i.e. the culturally informed criteria that define what is exchangeable and in what social contexts; and (iii) the contextual dimension, or the commodity *context*, which links the ‘commodity candidacy of a thing to the commodity phase of its career’ (Appadurai 1986: 15). He points out that ‘the commodity phase of the life history of an object does not exhaust its biography’ and, indeed, most of the ‘politics of value’ consists of struggles in which the zone of commodity candidacy of things is contested (Appadurai 1986: 17).¹²

Appadurai’s inspired treatise on the nature of commoditisation offers rich pickings for my analysis of the production, exchange and consumption of cattle in the livelihoods of rural South Africans. I show below that tracking these particular ‘things-in-motion’, specifically how they are used, exchanged and consumed, can be a fruitful line of enquiry.¹³ Furthermore, plotting the commodity candidacy and context of cattle at different times in their lives and situating the lives and circumstances of the holders of cattle at different periods in recent history is similarly rewarding, as indeed the Comaroffs and others (for example, Hutchinson 1996; Bank 1997) have shown. In this respect, Appadurai’s (1986: 21) concept of ‘tournaments of value’, or what he describes as ‘complex periodic events that are removed in some culturally well-defined way from the routines of economic life...[and in which] what is at stake is...the disposition of the central tokens of value in the society in question’,

¹² Thomas (1991: 21) has noted that ‘if ... value can be reinterpreted in specific social contexts, as well as at an abstract level of economic logic, then it must be appreciated that the estimations [which] people make draw upon a range of historical and sentimental considerations, which may qualify, specify or even negate wider systemic criteria such as scarcity, utility and cultural categorization.’

¹³ Although calves are literally produced through the reproductive powers of mature cattle, it is men (and occasionally women) whose ‘shoulders’ (i.e. toil, often as migrant workers) are said to produce cattle. Cattle in this sense embody the employment and personal histories of their owners – and consequently also a part of their owners’ perceptions of self – and they may bear the names of the companies or work colleagues with whom their owners were engaged during the period of the purchase or birth of these animals (Derick Fay, personal communication, February 2000; see Comaroff & Comaroff 1990).

is also suggestive. In a number of ways, the rural cattle auctions or stocksales that are held throughout the communal areas of the Eastern Cape exemplify exactly this, except that the ‘society’ in question is South African society, with all its sub-texts of racial and class difference (see Chapter Three).

For many Xhosa-speaking people, cattle are at least partially ‘enclaved’ commodities, i.e. they are ‘total social phenomena’ in that, particularly through their exchange, they embody, legitimise, give meaning and (differentially) empower the participants in a myriad of social relationships (Comaroff & Comaroff 1990).¹⁴ It is precisely at times when the relationships that exist between people, ideally so ably represented and mediated by cattle, are threatened that new cultural ambiguities are introduced and contestations of value might be anticipated. In the process, the partial or even complete commoditisation of the exchange and consumption of cattle may follow. In this dissertation, enquiry into the elements of commoditisation in the purchase and subsequent consumption of cattle through, for instance, ritual slaughter (see Chapter Nine), as well as the entrenched practice of selling cattle to outsider, mostly white buyers, serves to highlight significant gender, generation and class ambiguities among Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape.

It is Gudeman’s elegant treatise on the ‘anthropology of economy’ (Gudeman 2001) that provides the key theoretical framework for my study. His notion that economies should be seen as comprising two dialectically related realms, namely the community and the market, is particularly apposite for tying together the many strands of the ‘cultural economics’ of cattle production in Peddie District.¹⁵ Gudeman (2001: 5) argues that economic practices and relationships take place within four incommensurate value domains (the base, social relationships, trade and accumulation), each with distinct local meanings that are contested and changing.

¹⁴ The Comaroffs (1990: 197) follow Kuper (1982: 11) in noting that one could list endless examples of ‘the centrality of cattle in ritual and bridewealth, of their celebration in idiom and song, and of their salience as political currency’. They go on to argue, however, that this does not elucidate the reasons why cattle per se were drafted into this central role, by whom and on whose terms and indeed, how they have fared since being drafted in, which is where my interest lies.

¹⁵ Gudeman (2001: 1) writes that ‘[B]oth realms are ever-present but we bring now one, now the other into the foreground in practice and ideology... sometimes the two faces of economy are separated, at other times they are mutually dependent, opposed or interactive. But always their shifting relation is filled with tension’ (see also Gudeman 2001: 11-12). Although dualist, this formulation is qualitatively different to that of Houghton, Mbeki and others in their portrayals of the South African (agrarian) economy (referred to in Chapter One).

The main activity of the market, Gudeman notes, is to make profit and accumulate capital. In contrast, the central activity of a community is to expand 'the base', by which he means a community's 'commons' resources (such as land and water), produced things, shared interests, forms of knowledge, laws and customs, as well as imagined identities and solidarities (Gudeman 2001: 25-67). He argues that the base comprises 'cultural agreements and beliefs that provide a structure for all the domains' and that these locally defined values are 'unpriced, heterogeneous, and often sorted into incommensurate spheres' (Gudeman 2001: 7-8, 44-45). Exchanges within community are predicated on social relationships, which consist of 'valued communal connections maintained as ends themselves...through which the base is created, allotted and apportioned to people in community' (Gudeman 2001: 8). Although exchange in the market prioritises profit maximisation through buying and selling, the market also constantly draws on and feeds off community, as it relies on socially constituted units and relationships and may at times draw a surplus from a community economy.

Echoing Ferguson (1985), Gudeman argues that economies always feature degrees of commensuration and exchange, but neither is ever total. Within the domain of market exchange are created pathways or bounded exchanges that reflect the presence of community and market. The 'alchemy of money', he suggests, 'create[s] the fiction that a flattened, comparable world exists' when in fact, the dialectics of community and market exist in all exchanges (Gudeman 2001: 15).¹⁶

Important for my analysis is Gudeman's (2001: 20) view of community as 'a repository of possibilities and incommensurate value arenas, rather than the negation of capitalism', since the two, i.e. community and the market (capitalist production, exchange and consumption), are intertwined and mutually constitutive. He demonstrates how, for the Kekchi Maya of southern Belize, self-sufficiency in corn [maize] production provides an assurance against economic uncertainty, plays a role in ritual and identity and constitutes a 'badge of household position and village membership'. Corn production thereby connects the household and the community, outside the market. By contrast, the rice that is produced by the Kekchi as a cash crop

¹⁶ He argues that Appadurai's work on commodities, while useful, fails to fully explore the connections between the market and communal realms (Gudeman 2001: 19).

fulfils few if any of these functions, yet allows for the accumulation of cash (Gudeman 2001: 44-45). Gudeman's (2001: 163) plea is that since '...[our] disparate identities place on us incommensurate demands, the conversation concerning how we divide our economic life between community and market must take place outside the market discourse. We ought not let ourselves be persuaded that the coin has only one side' (cf. Berry 1993). As my analysis in ensuing chapters shows, the people of Peddie District are all engaged in this conversation, both within their own households and villages and in their relations with the world beyond their villages.

Identity politics and ritual practice

The Comaroffs, like many others, have asked how it is possible to render 'European imperialism and its aftermath without reducing it to crude equations of power, domination and alienation' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993: xiii). They answer this question by advocating a historical anthropology that 'stresses...the brute realities of colonialism and its aftermath without assuming that they have robbed African peoples of their capacity to act on the world'. This clearly resonates with Kiernan's (1997) call alluded to earlier.

Concerns with 'native' agency have a clear precedent in the Eastern Cape, specifically in the ethnographic work conducted by Philip and Iona Mayer in East London during the late 1950s.¹⁷ The Mayers posited a fundamental divide between two categories of (especially rural) Xhosa people, the *abantu ababomvu* [red people] and the *abantu basesikolweni* [school people].¹⁸ The Red people, identifiable by their distinctive dress and their particularistic ritual and social practice, stood aloof and were said to be conservative or traditional for the manner in which they vehemently resisted the inroads of Western ways on their identity and cultural practices (McAllister 1980; cf. Lan 1989). In contrast, the School people had embraced the Christianity and Western education served up by the missionaries and were eager to participate as consumers in the 'modern' economy, albeit on their own terms and without jettisoning elements of their still-distinctive Xhosa cultural practices. Peddie

¹⁷ Their work was, however, criticised for being ahistorical and for lacking sufficient critical engagement with the political economy of apartheid South Africa (Magubane 1973; Beinart & Bundy 1987; Fay 1996).

¹⁸ Also referred to as *amaqaba* [heathens] and *amagqoboka* [converted] (Mayer & Mayer 1961: 1,72).

District in the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, was said to be 'very Red', although sizeable pockets of School Xhosa were to be found, especially in villages adjacent to mission settlements (Mayer 1980b: 9,42,73).

In Mayer (1980b) a revised explanation of the 'two ideologies' is presented at some length. Here, Mayer argued that the division between Red and School Xhosa characterised the period from 1850 to about 1970. By the 1970s, however, both 'folk-cultures had been heavily diluted...by the spread into the countryside of a new, secular and consumerist, urban-influenced culture' and had both evolved into an amorphous 'rural resistance ideology [that was] opposed to the prevailing patterns of economic and political dominance' by the white settler political and economic regime and whites more generally (Mayer 1980b: 3). Mayer argued that betterment schemes played a major part in finally destroying the Red folk culture as a coherent way of life, especially in the Ciskei (see Chapter Three of this dissertation). Conversely, higher population mobility and the townward migration of people, as a result of rural stagnation, sped up the 'urbanization of the countryside', leading to the development of greater affinities between School culture and 'Black urban' culture that undermined the previously distinctive School identity.

I am reluctant to make too much of the currently rather more fluid 'Red' and 'School' distinction as virtually all my informants pointed out that 'everyone goes to school and church these days, so there is no more [distinctively] Red and School [people]'. Having said that, people in Peddie District did recognise and sometimes applied these labels to the differences of lifestyle and in 'inward or outward' orientation (in terms of both social and economic investments) that existed between the residents of different village sections of one village, or when making comparisons between different parts of the district itself.

Central to local forms of identity, and one of the many ways in which black people in South Africa act on the world, is ritual practice (see Chapter Eight). The Comaroffs argue that we should see ritual as 'signifying practices, ...as a vital element in the processes that make and remake social facts and collective identities' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993: xvi). They go on in their inimitable style to contend that

[Ritual] is less about giving voice to shared values than about opening fields of argument; about providing the terms and tropes, that is, through which people caught up in changing worlds may vex each other, question definitions of value, form alliances, and mobilize oppositions' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993: xxiii, xxix).

This insight seems especially pertinent in trying to conceptualise what people in rural Peddie district are 'really doing' when they conduct rituals, during which they slaughter both cattle and goats to their ancestors with the regularity that they do.¹⁹ This is particularly so if, as the Comaroffs suggest,

[R]itual, as an experimental technology intended to affect the flow of power in the universe, is an especially likely response to contradictions created and (literally) engendered by processes of social, material, and cultural transformation, processes represented, rationalized, and authorized in the name of modernity and its various alibis ("civilization," "social progress", "economic development"...and the like). (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993: xxx).

It seems to me that the ritual slaughtering of cattle (and small stock) in the rural Eastern Cape did indeed open up social spaces for people to negotiate, contest local meanings (and critically, meanings dislocated through the contingencies of long-term and long-distance migrancy, residential fluidity and urban-rural straddling), social hierarchies, orders and power relations, including genealogies, inheritances and kin relatedness (Hughes-Freeland & Crain 1998b: 2). But these acts of intentionality were unlikely to be explicit or vulgar and they were not readily available to be 'read off' as a text by the observer (Crapanzano 1986). Rather, much contestation of social spaces was not only layered, multivocal and contradictory, but also subtle and embodied in practice (located in the 'doing' and the 'being' rather than the spoken) and thus be more or less opaque to the casual observer (see Bourdieu 1990: 13; Mitchell 1998).

However, as Crain (1998) argues cogently in her study of ritual in the Ecuadorean Andes, this aspect of agency and intentionality may be especially important in the face of apparently increasing individualism and a widening wealth gap that differentiates between related people in urban and rural settings and within each of these variously connected social spaces (see Campbell & Rew [eds.] 1999). Hence the apparently key

¹⁹ There is the danger here of engaging in arguments about 'false consciousness'. In his subtle essay on exchange, Davis (1992: 25) questions the validity of an 'assumption that under the surface of social activity lies a reality which is in some way truer or more real than mere appearances [and which the external observer can uncover]...it is unjustifiable to assume that what is deeper is necessarily more real'. (See also Klopper 1991: 154).

significance of the ideology of 'building the home' in this context of serious social dislocation and population mobility, economic uncertainty and involution and cultural changes (McAllister 2001; cf. Ngwane 2003; Gudeman 2001).

Diverse livelihoods, multiple strategies: Straddling town and country

Since the late 1990s, a great deal has been written about livelihoods in southern Africa and elsewhere, specifically 'rural' and 'sustainable' livelihoods.²⁰ Much of the recent interest in livelihoods stems from renewed attempts to understand the nature of poverty on the part of the British government's *Department for International Development* (DFID). Carney (1998) and others based in the United Kingdom, particularly a number of researchers and policy analysts linked to the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), have been influential in developing this area of study.²¹

Ellis' notion of a 'livelihood' is that it 'encompasses income, both cash and in kind, as well as the social institutions (kin, family, compound, village and so on), gender relations, and property rights required to support and to sustain a given standard of living. A livelihood also includes 'access to, and benefits derived from, social and public services provided by the state such as education, health services, roads, water supplies and so on' (Ellis 1998: 4; see also Ellis [2000: 10], where he defines a livelihood in terms of 'assets, activities and access to these assets').

The largely DFID-funded body of work on livelihoods, which Murray (2002: 493) refers to as the 'official SL [Sustainable Livelihoods] approach, has quickly infiltrated the rhetoric and practice of development-oriented research aimed at investigating and mitigating poverty. Variations of the SL model have been adopted by researchers working in Zimbabwe (Campbell *et al.* 2002; Scoones *et al.* 1996) and in South Africa (Baber 1996; Cousins 1999; Lahiff 2003; Shackleton *et al.* 2001; Carter & May 1999; Murray 2000, 2002). In South Africa, non-governmental

²⁰ Ellis (2000: ix) makes the point, however, that the 'relatively recent discovery [of rural livelihoods] by the development profession should not be confused with the advent of something startlingly new...in a profession that is notoriously prone to fads, it is a mistake to confuse increased awareness of a phenomenon with changes in its nature, incidence or importance.'

²¹ More recently, DFID-funded livelihoods-related research in South Africa by a consortium of researchers from the University of Manchester and the London School of Economics (Murray 2002).

organizations (NGOs) and parastatal institutions alike have adopted the livelihoods jargon, sometimes uncritically and without any explicit reference to the SL framework, as with the Agricultural Research Council's 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods' programme (Aucamp 2001).²²

Recently, however, a number of criticisms of the SL framework have emerged (Bryceson & Bank 2001; Campbell *et al.* 2002: 125ff). Murray (2000, 2002) reviews the tenuous links that actually exist in many cases between what he calls 'prospective' research as posited by the SL approach and the fraught and complex terrain of policy-making. As an opening gambit, he questions how we are to know now what livelihoods are going to be 'sustainable' in the future (Murray 2002: 492ff). On issues of methodology, he argues strongly for the need for longitudinal data on livelihoods, that trace people's 'livelihood trajectories' to illuminate the processes of change and the impacts thereof on their lives. Murray expresses reservations about the ability of conventional SL research methodologies to transcend the boundaries of local 'communities' in trying to understand 'both intra-household relationships and significant inter-household social relationships as these change over time' (Murray 2002: 501).

A further criticism of the SL framework is its weakness in relation to intra-household, particularly gendered, struggles over resource allocation and consumption (see Bank & Qambata 1999: 5-6), as well as the 'relations between households and wider structures of politics and power' (Farrington 2001; Baumann & Sinha 2001; Hussein 2002).²³ The SL framework is particularly weak on considerations of political economy, primarily in failing to problematise the modern state – which cannot simply be viewed as a policy-making machine to be fed supposedly more nuanced data on the nature of poverty and livelihoods – and the 'world political order' in the development of the 'Third World' or the 'South'. Two examples will suffice to make this point. The first is Ellis' innocuous statement that 'the components of this framework are deliberately broad and lacking in matters of detail, since the key constraints and policy

²² Similarly, in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, research into 'sustainable livelihoods' has flourished in recent years (see Ainslie *et al.* 1997; Monde 2003; Fraser *et al.* 2003; Kepe & Scoones 1999, Kepe 2002a and Lahiff 2003).

²³ See Ashley and Carney (1999: 48ff) for 'Appendix 2: Uses, strengths and weaknesses of SL approaches' and a recognition that the 'SL framework overall can convey a somewhat cleansed, neutral approach to power issues' (Ashley & Carney 1999: 35).

issues that arise *will always be specific to local circumstances* (Ellis 2000: 241) [my emphasis]. The second is Ashley and Carney's (1999: 35) suggestion that adapting the framework, through the inclusion of 'political capital' as a sixth asset, 'may well be useful in some cases'. Neither of these does anything to dispel anxieties about the de-politicising nature of the SL project.

But Bryceson and Bank (2001: 11-12) argue that, in the current context of what they style as 'post-modern liberalism' in development thinking, this is to be expected. Such thinking, they argue, is built on consensus-seeking, open-ended plurality, ambiguity, and 'unspecified directionless movement' in which 'cause-effect relationships are difficult to disentangle'. They see the livelihoods concept as a product of this new development context, and argue that

[T]he livelihoods approach consists, in its current development agency formulation, of situational analysis with an increasingly standardised atheoretical and ahistorical format...[that] abstract[s] from larger contextual forces (Bryceson & Bank 2001: 11-12)

While not making explicit use of the 'official' SL framework, some studies have nevertheless been interested to explore the same set of issues, i.e. changing livelihoods, the viability or vulnerability of 'peasant' agriculture, as well as issues of poverty and identity in the face of political-economic, social and environmental change (for instance, Moore & Vaughan 1994; Ainslie 1998; Bryceson 2000).

In the Eastern Cape, a recent study comprising three, discrete case-studies was conducted in rural localities by three senior anthropologists attached (at the time) to Rhodes University.²⁴ Although surprisingly weak on integration, the DARE case-studies generated new insights into the impact of changing livelihoods on household forms and social relationships, in the context of agrarian transformations and dynamic employment patterns (Manona 1999; Bank & Qambata 1999; McAllister 1999, 2001; Bank 2001). It is with this anthropological literature, rather than the broader literature that adheres to the more formulaic and economistic checklist approach of the 'official' SL framework, that I engage here.

²⁴ Cecil Manona, Pat McAllister and Leslie Bank. This study was done under the auspices of the 'De-Agrarianization and Rural Employment (DARE) Project' led by Deborah Bryceson at the African Studies Center at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands (Bryceson 1993, 2002).

The livelihood theme cuts across the other theoretical concerns of this dissertation. Understanding livelihoods constitutes a key analytical, and thus also methodological, concern of my study. Put simply, it encompasses how best to understand and capture the continuous, multi-directional movements of people, things, information and even cultural ‘styles’ between rural areas and urban centres – and also within these spaces – within the broader East London-Peddie District-Port Elizabeth nexus.

Materially, it is these movements that constitute the ‘stuff’ of diverse and dynamic livelihoods, as people parcel out their children to kin in other areas, work as migrants either in rural areas (as teachers, clerks or agricultural extension workers) or in cities (as industrial, service sector and domestic workers), or move between the two to secure rights to state transfers or deal with the government bureaucracy in other ways, to seek work, and so on.

But the mobility and migrancy that characterise the Eastern Cape bear the stamp of successive pieces of Apartheid legislation (Mayer 1980b: 19). African migrant workers were not allowed to reside permanently in urban centres, except in mining compounds, and were forced to maintain a rural base in a ‘native reserve area’ from whence they went out to seek work. Later, the systematic removal by force of ‘black-spot’ settlements displaced millions of Africans to rural ‘bantustan’ areas and the ironically named ‘closer settlements’ which were often situated far from centres of employment and education.

Significantly, even after the scrapping of discriminatory apartheid legislation, these movements persist and continue to have an impact in a number of ways on people’s notions of self, community and their understandings of the world around them (Glaser 2001: 185). Their mobility influences and is influenced by the decisions they take concerning what and where to make their major material investments, for example, in houses, cattle and so on, and in respect of their social and ritual ‘investments’ in building their networks (Crain 1998).

Given this situation, how are we to understand cattle-holding in contemporary Peddie District? The people I encountered in rural Peddie District were fully integrated into the market (and money) economy and this was the case right in their villages, not

only when they made forays into the city. There was no residual, separate 'subsistence' sector that existed independent of the reach of the market. Peddie residents were, for instance, able to sell cattle by making one telephone call to any one of several speculators or meat-buyers nearby or in an adjacent urban area. This person would arrive within a day or two to negotiate a price for their animals.

However, to say that they were fully integrated into the money economy is not the same as suggesting that they were without other, more localised, 'cultural' means of structuring and assigning value (Appadurai 1986). Indeed, it was this economic connectedness that made their cultural 'commodity paths' at village level both varied and interesting. In the chapters that follow, I use the theoretical insights outlined here to explore the various dimensions of cattle-holding that animated the lives of people in Peddie District.

CHAPTER THREE

Aspects of Cattle Production in the Ciskeian Reserves/Bantustan and the Eastern Cape Province (1930-2001)

If these races could be encouraged or enabled to eat more of their cattle, it is not inconceivable that they would thereby acquire energy and ambition which, irrespective of any taxation or recruiting organization, would lead them away from their tribes in search of money (Hutt 1934: 213).

Thirty-seven super-fertile Nguni bulls, [with a] price tag of R482 000 [are] to benefit at least 100 black small [sic] farmers in the Eastern Cape and Northern Province. The bulls are rotated among farming communities to sow their seed [sic] among the cows...Agricultural experts say it will take 3 to 4 years for the bulls and their progeny to make their mark on the general herds, yielding better prices for farmers' livestock. This will allow them to buy other superior stock. 'There should be an explosion of improved material,' says Paul Magnusson of the Agricultural Research Council, which managed the government grant (*Daily Dispatch*, 3 August 2001).

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine some of the social, economic and agrarian changes that have taken place over the period 1930-2001 in the 'Ciskeian' reserves and particularly in Peddie District.¹ I also explore the changes and continuities that characterised 'official' thinking and interventions into cattle production in the reserves during these seven decades (cf. Wolmer & Scoones 2000; Nieuwenhuysen 1964a).

My analysis focuses especially on the period that constituted Ciskeian 'self-government' and 'independence', i.e. the years 1972-1994, and the first seven years of post-apartheid government (1994-2001). By analysing some of the key development interventions² over these two periods, I point to the lasting legacy of ethnocentric, modernist premises in the agricultural/rural development sector of the province (Kepe & Cousins 2002; Wotshela 2001, 2004).

¹ I rely for the most part on published and unpublished secondary sources, and on the available archival record, including the extensive (but incomplete) records of the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation.

² I do not revisit in detail the implementation of 'Betterment Planning' for which there exists an extensive literature. See, for instance, De Wet (1985a, 1987b, 1995a), Hendricks (1989, 1990), Beinart (1984, 2003), McAllister (1992) and Mager (1999).

The imperative to enhance 'commercialisation' in the agricultural sector has an impressive legacy in the rural Eastern Cape, surviving the demise of the bantustans to become a central tenet of the ANC-led government's neoliberal economic programme for rural areas. However, there remain two obstacles to 'commercialisation' that are intrinsic to the working of the 'modified' communal tenure regime (Beinart 1994: 19; Cousins 1996).³ The first is the right, enjoyed by all adult men (and their widows) by virtue of their birth (or later acceptance) into a particular village, to graze whatever livestock they own on the communal rangelands in their respective villages (see De Wet 1987a; Kepe 1999: 418-9). The minor controls on these communal resources had ceased by the 1980s, and in many rural locations the grazing system became virtually 'open access' (Cokwana 1988; Ainslie 1999). Beinart (1994: 31-33) points out that the persistence of various forms of communal tenure made it possible for migrant workers to continue to invest in livestock in the 'communal' reserves where they were relatively free from the threat of further alienation. Their 'interest' in cattle thus stemmed at least partly from the prohibition on establishing themselves in town.

The second obstacle to commercialisation was land-hunger, which was a bleak reality in the Ciskeian reserves by the late 1940s. The available rangelands were nevertheless perceived (correctly, as measured by their 'commercial-farmer' yardstick) by government officials to be grossly overstocked. Local livestock owners shared this concern, although the solutions they proposed to deal with this problem differed markedly from those of the state. The perception of rural people was that government, despite its interest in their affairs, consistently skirted around the overriding problem of land hunger (Beinart 2003: 353ff; Vetter 2003).

These two serious obstacles were not insurmountable. From the late 1930s through to the 1960s, the state was relatively successful in promoting the sale of cattle out of the reserves through its network of organised stocksales even though rural people remained distrustful of the actual intentions of the authorities. For the most part, however, it was left to rural white traders to play an intermediary role in buying and selling cattle (Fraser 1991: 138; Beinart 1977).

³ A third obstacle is the absence of other mechanisms for saving resources (see Chapter Four).

In 1955, the Tomlinson Commission argued that 55% of the cattle in the Ciskeian reserves should be culled to commercialise reserve agriculture (Switzer 1993: 326). This programme never took off and it was only in the mid-1970s, with 'independence' by then firmly on the agenda for the bantustans, that more serious attempts were made to develop the beef industry in the Ciskei. Even then, the state showed little resolve in implementing comprehensive programmes aimed at developing broad-based commercial beef production in the reserves. In any case, to be successful, such programmes would have required the co-operation of rural cattle-owners.

Where 'development' programmes were implemented, the approach remained largely unchanged and the overall impact remained patchy. Given that certain initiatives had been in place for decades—such as the bull leasing schemes—a degree of institutional 'path dependency' developed, in which government employees in these schemes sang the praises of their particular project, not least to protect their jobs. Without reviews of the individual programmes, recurring annual budget allocations from the state simply underwrote the continuation even of ineffective schemes.

The Ciskeian reserves: To develop or to contain?

The reserve system was legally enforced in post-1910 South Africa through the passing of the Natives' Land Act 27 of 1913. This Act set aside specific tracts of land for the exclusive occupation and ownership of 'natives', i.e. Africans. This meant, in effect, that Africans were prevented from acquiring land and accumulating capital outside these small specified areas.⁴

The schedule⁵ to the 1913 Act, which listed these areas, was based on the boundaries of the existing and overcrowded rural reserves in the Ciskei/Border region. Thus was

⁴ But the Act provided for the reserves to be expanded and consolidated to accommodate the African population (Switzer 1993: 196). The Supreme Court ruled in 1916 that the Act should not be applied in the Cape because it interfered with African franchise rights. Although this meant that between 1913 and 1936 Africans in the Cape (including in Peddie District) could still buy white-owned [freehold] land outside the reserves, they actually lost more land than they acquired during this period. After the passing of the Native Trust and Land Act 18 of 1936, they lost this window and by 1949 Africans owned just 37% of the land they had owned in the Ciskei in 1916 (Switzer 1993: 199).

⁵ The scheduled Peddie reserves were identified as Area 26, with a surface area of 54,612 ha (U.G 19/1916), which constituted 31% of the district. Another approximately 12,900 ha consisted variously

brought into existence the ‘truncated Ciskei reserve – the most underdeveloped area in South Africa’ (Switzer 1993: 13; Anonymous 1989). The scheduled areas set aside by the Land Act of 1913, as well as additional areas designated by the Native Trust and Land Act 18 of 1936, would be administered by the South African Native Trust (Beinart 1994: 118ff). The explicitly segregationist 1936 Land Act signalled a more active role for the central government in land conservation and resettlement inside the reserves, particularly in respect of livestock limitation and grazing management, and made provision for the establishment of a Tribal Trust Herd (Switzer 1993: 223; Bowen 1985).

The decline of peasant production in the reserves

The extent of the state’s intervention in the Ciskei reserves up to the mid-1950s, carried out principally through its Native Affairs Department (NAD), should not be overstated. Daniel (1981: 8) characterised the first half of the twentieth century as a ‘period of stagnation’ for agricultural production in the Ciskei, stemming from the relative neglect of the black rural areas by the central government. There were isolated activities, such as in Herschel District in the northern part of the Ciskei, where costly soil erosion stabilisation work was carried out by the NAD during the 1930s (Beinart 2003: 348-353). Valuable, if ultimately inadequate, extension work was also done in the Transkei reserves from the late 1920s through to the 1940s. In 1937 alone, 16,000 bulls and 5,000 rams were castrated in the Transkei, with 1,000 ‘pedigree’ bulls and 1,200 Merino rams introduced in their place (Beinart 2003: 353).

From the late 1940s, interventions by the state in agricultural production and rural life in the Ciskeian reserves began to gather momentum. These interventions took a number of forms, including modifications to the communal tenure system itself and newly introduced ‘traditional’ forms of institutional controls by headmen and sub-headmen that kept the white administration at arm’s length and allowed Xhosa men some space to recreate and embellish a pre-colonial patriarchal order (see Switzer 1993: 94-6). But the growing economic stranglehold exerted by headmen, white traders and labour recruiters over local people grew as a source of considerable frustration (Switzer 1993: 229; Beinart 1979).

of black people living on mission land, African-owned farms, Crown land not yet designated as part of the scheduled reserve and white-owned land fully occupied by black people.

Land-use planning interventions, specifically the introduction of Betterment Planning from the early 1950s, was a further frustration (see De Wet 1995a). Betterment involved enforced villagisation and the rationalisation of land-use through the demarcation and fencing of discrete residential, arable and grazing land-use areas, which rural people were obliged to recognise and maintain. It also included renewed efforts by government agencies to castrate or cull livestock, to genetically improve 'inferior' Xhosa-owned cattle and to initiate livestock sales in rural areas (De Wet 1987b; Mager 1999).⁶ These interventions, coupled with growing poverty and rural overcrowding, had serious implications for agrarian livelihoods and livestock holdings in particular in the reserves. Not surprisingly, in the absence of any increase in land-holdings for Africans, these state-imposed changes in tenure and land use management were regarded with suspicion and open hostility by many of the affected people.

By the 1930s, overstocking was already the 'perennial theme in official explanations of why land in the reserve[s] had deteriorated' (Switzer 1993: 210, 229ff). Displaying their characteristic entrepreneurial flair, white farmers argued that the government should subsidise the sale of cattle out of African areas to reduce stock numbers without penalising the peasants (Switzer 1993: 399 fnote 46).⁷

The Fagan Commission (UG 28-1948: 15) estimated the carrying capacity of the Ciskei reserves at 234,000 cattle units, and in 1955 the Tomlinson Commission would label the Ciskei the 'most heavily overstocked' reserve in South Africa (Switzer 1993: 210, 240). While the cattle numbers in the Ciskeian reserves fluctuated with droughts (see Table 3.1. below), Tomlinson noted that the number of

⁶ Regulations restricting the entry of stock into locations were initiated in the 1920s, but in the Cape, it was from 1934 that officials tried to restrict access by 'inferior' stock to grazing lands in the Ciskeian reserves, by means of Proclamation 198 (Switzer 1993: 405 fnote 116). Houghton and Forsdick (1950: 81) observed that the proclamation of the Keiskammahoek District as a Betterment Area placed a limit on the number of stock that could be grazed and restricted the movement of stock. This 'considerably reduced' speculation in livestock, which had been widespread among the (white) traders before. They also noted that there were no regular stock markets in the district, that the natives complained that they could only dispose of their stock to the traders who paid them a poor price, only to fatten the stock and 'resell it at a handsome profit'.

⁷ But sales of reserve cattle typically declined during periods of higher prices, leading to accusations of peasant 'irrationality'. However, this constitutes rational behaviour given that cattle represented rural people's savings, since fewer cattle needed to be sold when prices were higher in order to meet immediate household needs (Kerven 1992).

cattle *per household* in the Ciskei was the lowest of all the reserves in the country (Switzer 1993: 400, fnote 56).

Table 3.1. Cattle numbers and ‘cattle units’ in the Ciskei reserve, 1927-1953.

Year	1927	1930	1934	1936	1939	1948/9	1949/50	1953
Cattle	190 000	179 000	154 000	188 000	216 000	194 145	130 417	185 331
‘Cattle units’⁸	391 763	412 163	329 563	367 163	412 963	394 373	304 465	408 261
% over carrying capacity	67.4	76.1	40.8	56.9	76.5	68.8	30.1	74.5

source: Switzer (1993: 240)

In relation to arable production, Bundy (1988: 224) identified three factors that were already common in the Ciskei by the 1930s: (i) falling yields; (ii) an increasing scarcity of agrarian resources and heightened competition for them; and (iii) high out-migration that depleted the agricultural work force. These factors affected livestock production as well, as the two systems were well integrated. Oxen were used for ploughing and transporting produce and cattle grazed maize stubble, depositing manure on arable lands while doing so. Competition for arable and residential land meant increased pressure on common grazing resources, something which could pit livestock-owners against those without livestock (see Manona 1980a).

The first rehabilitation schemes in 1938 tended to focus on livestock-culling (Switzer 1993: 230). The Ciskei was regarded as a test case for dealing with overstocking with the *Livestock Control and Improvement Proclamation* No.31 of 1939 first introduced in the locations in the King William’s Town District. Stock-culling was to take place only after the households affected had been consulted and a majority were in favour of the plan.⁹ Government officials in conjunction with local councillors would determine how many stock would be allowed to remain on grazing land in

⁸ One ‘cattle unit’ is equivalent to one head of large stock (cattle, horse, mules and donkeys) and five head of small stock (sheep or goats), see Switzer (1993: 240).

⁹ As Mager (1995: 770) points out, stock limitation was ‘the one single issue which provoked the greatest resentment...To reduce a man’s cattle was not only to strip him of his wealth...but to destroy his social base in the community and the foundations of male supremacy. Reducing cattle numbers interfered drastically with African social and economic relationships...While men held onto cattle they retained the symbolic power of the patriarchal order.’ Stock culling was, in short, ‘the most hated element’ of the rehabilitation programmes (Moll 1988: 34).

each location. Condemned stock, mainly diseased or ill-fed animals and bulls and rams of poor quality, would be sold or otherwise removed from the proclaimed area (see De Wet 1980). Beinart notes that culling often took the line of least resistance by exempting most cattle and concentrating instead on donkeys, goats and sheep (Beinart 2003: 362). Although government officials hoped to reduce the number of cattle in South Africa's reserves by 50%, very little progress in culling cattle was made after the start of the Second World War (Switzer 1993: 230).

In 1945, rural development planning moved from the contested culling of livestock and land conservation to population resettlement and land-use planning (Beinart 2003: 363). The authorities remained concerned about the accumulation of large numbers of livestock by a rural minority and sought to flatten the profile of cattle ownership in the reserves, to give 'everybody a chance to have stock' (Beinart 2003: 361; Milton 1996). 'Progressive' scholars have linked the sharp decline in peasant production over the twentieth century to the increasing dependence of the reserve areas on economic developments in the urban economy of South Africa (see Bundy 1988). This dependence was said to be matched by the corresponding dependence of the mines and industry on the 'subsidised' labour and on meat-supplies drawn from the reserves (Wolpe 1972; Molteno 1977; see Milton 1996).¹⁰

In 1944, 35% of the household heads in the rural locations of King William's Town District had no cattle (42% had fewer than 5 head, while only 11% had 10 or more). In Keiskammahoek District, 29% had no cattle and 33% had 1-5 cattle (Switzer 1993: 210). In 1945, more than half the cattle and sheep and one third of the goats in the Ciskei reserves died as a result of the relentless drought (Mager 1992: 766). In 1948, R.W. Norton, who had been the Assistant Director of Native Agriculture for the Ciskei, summarised the situation as follows:

¹⁰ Green and Hirsch (1982: 66) articulated the 'radical position' on the African reserves with their pronouncement that 'The creation of the reserve system amounted to the subordination of the remaining pre-capitalist social formations to the capitalist mode of production at the level of the reproduction of labour. This was a politically necessary concession in the face of the seizure of most land by white farmers...[Disallowing individual land ownership in the reserves] seems to have been adopted for two reasons: firstly, it prevented complete proletarianisation for many Africans and maintained for them at least a token access to land; and secondly, it was an attempt to maintain the material basis of the power of chiefs and headmen [which was their remaining power of] discretion over the allocation of lands'. (See also Giliomee 1985).

The average land-holder...owns...[a] sub-economic number of stock. Above him is a relatively small favoured class of bigger owners. While some men own over a hundred cattle and as many as a thousand sheep, *over 60 per cent of the population owned five or fewer cattle, and 29 per cent owned no cattle at all* (U.G.28-1948, quoted in Bundy 1988: 224-5, my emphasis).

When the Tomlinson Commission investigated the 'socio-economic condition of the Native Reserves' in the early 1950s, the African reserves were already in a deep and relentless crisis. Drawing on ideas that had a long legacy in government thinking, Tomlinson proposed that the reserve population be divided into two categories, i.e. a farmer class, allocated 'economic units' of land under freehold title, and a class of proletarianised, rurally-based wage-earners who were to have no rights to arable land nor to own livestock but who would instead subsist by means of wages earned in the decentralised industries that would be encouraged on the borders of the reserves (Bundy 1988: 227; Wotshela 2001: 4).

In the end, Tomlinson's recommendations were mostly rejected by the Nationalist government, which recognised that extending freehold tenure would pose a serious threat to the resuscitated chieftaincy (Beinart 1994: 155). Under Verwoerd, the Nationalist Government would come to see the bantustans as key to the absorption of 'surplus' Africans (see Posel 1991:4-5). Bantustan populations would be ruled under a reinvented system of 'traditional' authorities. To effect the programme, the government embarked on two initiatives, industrial decentralisation and renewed environmental rehabilitation in the reserves (see Rogers 1980: 110ff; Glaser 1987). The full-blown surgery advocated by Tomlinson, which required moving vast numbers of people out of the reserves and into non-existent urban houses and employment, was ruled out. Instead, Betterment Schemes were given a new lease of life and a new generation of planners set about restructuring land use patterns in the reserves. In the process, they sought to restructure, regulate and limit rural people's access to arable land and to place restrictions on their rights to livestock ownership.

The related struggles of black tenants on white-owned farms

While livestock owners and cultivators were faring poorly in the reserves from the 1930s, the state was making serious attempts to keep black people, especially the dependents of active labourers, out of the urban centres. Influx control legislation,

such as the 1930 and 1937 amendments to the 1923 Native (Urban Areas) Act, sought to stem the out-migration from the reserves (Bundy 1988: 234). These measures were only moderately successful. The Ciskeian reserves could not absorb the growth in population over the period 1916-1951 and the proportion of African people who actually lived in the reserves declined steadily over time, i.e. from nearly 74% in 1916 to 58.3% in 1951 (Simkins 1979: 19). As Switzer (1993: 200,236) notes, 'Ciskei[an] Africans – there are no published statistics but they must have numbered in the tens of thousands – left the region each year and never returned'.

In the 1936 census, 37% of the total African population of South Africa were recorded as living on farms, 45% were in reserves and 17% were in towns (Beinart 1994: 14).¹¹ By 1945, wealthy white farmers in the Border Corridor (the farming corridor that extends from East London to Queenstown in the interior) were demanding the removal of black 'squatters' (i.e. African tenants). They wished to take advantage of the post-war boom in the demand for agricultural products by capitalising and mechanising their farming operations, free from the pressures of black tenants, and their alleged theft of fences and cattle (Mager 1999: 21ff). In some areas, however, the daily lives and livelihoods of impoverished white land-owners and their African tenants were still intertwined. Drought in 1945 drove 'nearly all the white farmers in Peddie District' into wage employment and several white 'rentier' farmers came to rely heavily on the rents paid by their tenants. They also relied on their tenants' cattle to plough the farmer's lands, and expected the tenant to plough his own fields at the weekends (Mager 1999: 25). On balance, however, white farmers began to bring increasing political pressure to bear on the authorities to rid the Ciskei and Border areas of what they regarded as troublesome and superfluous black tenant-farmers.

Responding to these farmers' demands, NAD officials argued that environmental problems which white farmers ascribed to labour tenancy could instead be addressed by livestock reduction (Mager 1999: 27-8). But grazing and dipping fees for tenants' livestock were already high, as was pressure from individual white farmer on their tenants to reduce the number of cattle they owned. Increasingly, Xhosa men on farms

¹¹ Beinart (1994: 14) makes the important point that '[T]here never was a 'white man's country' nor 'white farms' in the sense that these were zones of numerically predominant white occupation, only in the sense that whites, through their economic and political power, exercised control over the people on them.'

had to seek work as migrants to offset these costs. Tenancy thus became vulnerable and many Xhosa people could only continue through 'a combination of male migrants' earnings and women's agricultural labour' (Mager 1999: 29). Men's mobility came at the expense of tying women to the land and having women take greater responsibility for agrarian production.¹²

Nor did nature help. The devastating drought in 1945 was followed by another in 1949. Both of them devastated herds on white-owned farms and in the adjacent Ciskeian reserves (Mager 1999: 84). But continued tenancy on white-owned farms represented the last hope for Xhosa men living outside the reserve areas, who wanted to hold onto cattle and thereby 'delay the moment of final proletarianization' (Mager 1999: 32). The first piece of legislation to deal with tenancy was the *Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act* No.52 of 1951 (Wotshela 2001: 4). This was followed in 1956, when Chapter Four of the 1936 Land Act was finally proclaimed, empowering divisional councils to compel white farmers to curtail labour tenancy on their farms. All tenants were to be removed within fifteen years (Mager 1999: 40). While some dispossessed tenants were removed to places like Zwelitsha, close to King William's Town, and the 'townships' adjacent to smaller towns in the region, considerable numbers of tenants ended up in the already congested reserves of Peddie, Victoria East and Middledrift Districts (Mager 1999: 46; Fox & Tipler 1996).

The increase in unemployment among unskilled black people who had been pushed off white-owned farms and removed from so-called 'black spots' during the 1960s and 1970s meant that white farmers could afford to sacrifice their remaining labour-tenants (Bundy 1988: 235). The Ciskeian reserves were patently unable to absorb the several hundred thousand people who were forced into the villages and 'closer settlements' or 'growth points' in the bantustans (Beinart 1994: 195-9; Hindson 1987).

¹² For the Ciskei reserves there was a sharp rise in the migration of adult women workers between 1936 and 1946. By 1946 women constituted about half of the African population in Port Elizabeth and East London (Beinart 1994: 121).

A period of modernisation and mimicry, 1972-1994

It has to be remembered that the Ciskei is not an economic island but part of an integrated border region... The outlook for the Ciskei is at present very bleak. It possesses all the features of a third world economy, under-employment, land infertility, poverty, poor natural resources, problems that will not be solved merely by a declaration of independence (Freeman [1981: 25], writing four months before the Ciskei took 'independence' in December 1981).¹³

The 1970s saw the culmination of the apartheid government's evolving policy of dealing with the 'black problem' (Green & Hirsch 1982). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, apartheid planners conjured up a number of ethnically based, supposedly economically and politically viable, 'independent' black states, with all the symbolic trappings of statehood (Jones 1999). For the Ciskei, this involved joining up the disparate fragments of communal reserve and black-owned freehold land, as well as some of the small towns. The consolidation proposals for the Ciskei that were mooted in 1972 indicated that the Ciskei would gain 185,385 ha of land, of which more than half (97,643 ha) was situated in Peddie District. The town of Peddie was incorporated into the then 'self-governing' Ciskei in August 1974 (Freeman 1981: 17).

Ciskeian economic viability was an illusion as the agrarian economies in most reserve areas had weakened considerably over the course of the twentieth century (Simkins 1981). Race-based legislation that resulted in the uprooting of white traders and labour recruiters, who had played a pivotal, intermediary role in the rural economy for most of the previous century, compounded the problem. Addressing the weakened state of the 'rural' economy would require considerable planning and financial resources from the South African government. It is not clear from the planning documents I have studied whether the state planners realised the enormity and complexity of their ambition. Indeed, in his recent analysis of resettlement politics in the northern Ciskei, Wotshela (2001: 9) shows convincingly that black resistance, new ideological developments and the inability of the state to control black population movements meant that the apartheid state was 'never fully able to realise its plans for resettlement in and around the Ciskei'.

¹³ Compare this with the following quotation, 'The population of the Ciskei, then, is more than just a number of people; it is a distinctive group, a society, with its own structure, its own way of life, its own problems of waste and inefficiency, and its peculiar burdens of the very young and the very old' (Els 1971: 49).

Government planners in the late 1960s adopted two main strategies. One strategy was the promotion of heavily subsidised, supply-driven, industrial decentralisation through so-called ‘border industries’ and later, ‘growth points’ within the bantustans (Glaser 1987; Hirsch 1987). The border industries were set up close to the mushrooming rural slums, where millions of people found that the arbitrary redrawing of political boundaries placed them within the borders of ‘independent’ bantustans (Nel & Temple 1992). But none were established in Peddie District. Overall, these industries provided vastly inadequate (and exploitative) employment opportunities to the rural people stuck in the bantustans (Hart, G. 2002; Nel 1996).

The second strategy concerns us more directly here. As the South African regime’s exasperation mounted with apparent absence of any surplus production directed at the market in the reserves, the promotion of capital-intensive commercial agriculture in the bantustans, particularly with the aim of establishing a class of full-time, ‘small’ farmers, began to exercise the imagination of planners with a renewed urgency (Simkins 1984; Page 1981: 386ff).

In the late 1970s, the Ciskei National Development Plan was set out by a team of planners led by Gary Godden from the Ciskei Department of Agriculture and Forestry (cf. Wotshela 2001). Assistance came from the Rural Development Institute located at the National Party ‘*verligte*’ stronghold of Stellenbosch University (see Page 1981). I do not deal here with the envisaged institutional arrangements of the Plan. I am more interested to consider what empirical research data were actually available to this team in formulating their plans, specifically as these related to the cattle production sector in the Ciskei.

The standard reference text at the time was the collection edited by Els (1971), and especially the paper by D.L. Brown, Professor of Animal Science at the University of Fort Hare, which characterised the development of agriculture in the Ciskei as ‘a tremendous challenge’(see also Board 1960; Brown 1969; Brown *et al.* 1975). Brown (1971: 170) argued that the ‘rapid development and re-orientation of the existing subsistence-type of farming...[was] of vital importance’. He noted that most natural resources in the Ciskeian reserves had been ‘universally reduced to a dangerously low level in terms of productive capacity’ and that [human] nutritional deficiency

diseases, such as pellagra and kwashiorkor, occurred throughout the territory (Brown 1971: 171).

Brown hinted at discord and lack of co-operation in the administration of the reserves. Firstly, although some 63% of the Ciskei's rangelands had been planned by 1968, with rotational grazing systems introduced, the authorities had failed to gain the co-operation of all the livestock-owners affected by these grazing schemes. Secondly, despite drought and government culling, the Ciskeian reserves remained grossly overstocked, with the districts of Peddie, Victoria East and Middledrift exceeding the estimated carrying capacity by more than 100%. Thirdly, Brown noted that livestock census data were based on estimates, not actual counts, and were therefore underestimates because of the common practice of illegally moving livestock prior to the annual enumeration (Brown 1971: 177).

Regarding cattle husbandry, Brown argued that the 'principle [or 'tribal tradition'] of quantity and not quality' still prevailed, that the cows in reserve areas underperformed reproductively, with low average calving percentages (30-50%) and high cattle mortality. He was critical of the 38% of the cattle population that were oxen (retained for ploughing purposes), but that placed undue pressure on the grazing resources. He conceded that fairly large numbers of cattle were sold annually on local auction sales.¹⁴ But he noted that they fetched prices that were consistently lower than white-owned cattle, apparently because of the higher incidence of cysticercosis among cattle in the reserves.¹⁵

To address these and other challenges, Brown advocated a 'far-reaching policy in agrarian planning and reform...in activating further economic progress' in reserve agriculture (Brown 1971: 182). However, he failed to elaborate any understanding of the subordinate role played by the reserves in the South African political economy. Thus he noted matter-of-factly that the population density of Ciskeian reserves was

¹⁴ Trollope (1976: 211) noted that there was a 27% decrease in 'animal units' in Peddie District between the 1955 livestock census (31,377 units) and the 1972 census (22,941 units), with goats decreasing from 41,378 to 25,696 (38%). He suggested that culling schemes and more recently, public livestock stocksales as well as the very severe drought conditions which prevailed between 1964 and 1969, accounted for the decrease in animal numbers.

¹⁵ Elsewhere, Brown (1969) argued that during the period 1958 and 1967, cattle sold on public auctions increased by 534%, and he took this as evidence of a growing 'cash consciousness' among the farmers (cited in Trollope 1976: 212).

115 people/square mile and that the level of education of the adult farming community lay between standards two and four. He considered widespread malnutrition 'among the Bantu...as the population's inability to adapt itself to a sedentary form of crop and animal culture' as well as 'the direct result of geographical determination of boundaries' (Brown 1971: 182). Although he acknowledged that the 'thorny problems of existing forms of land tenure and credit facilities, which [struck] at the very root of agricultural production in the Bantu areas', needed to be 'recognised as vitally important considerations in modern land-use', he offered no insights as to how he thought these issues might be addressed.

I have reviewed Brown's paper in detail to illuminate a few points about the characterisation of the Ciskeian reserves at the time. The first, already mentioned, is that his paper (admittedly a chapter in an edited collection that included papers on a wide range of topics, including the history of the Ciskeian reserves) lacks any historical explanation of the agricultural sector of the Ciskei in the context of the broader South African political economy. He offered no account of the extensive contact (for instance, through the trade in livestock) between reserve farmers and white commercial farmers and trading-store keepers in and adjacent to the Ciskei reserves. He pointedly made no attempt to account for the low educational levels that were characteristic of the Ciskei. On the serious nutritional deficiencies that plagued the Ciskei reserve, he argued simply that the 'Bantu are...liable to dispose of their crops of [nutritious] beans and peas...and to purchase refined maize-meal with its inherent deficiencies' (Brown 1971: 171).

Secondly, his characterisation of reserve agriculture was of a tradition-bound and, with steady deterioration of the natural resources, ultimately entropic system, that had little inherent capacity to adapt to external changes, whether climatic or economic.¹⁶ Only an undisclosed number of 'progressive farmers' registered a change regarding the 'principle of quantity over quality' (Brown 1971: 177). By characterising the difficulties facing outside stimulation of reserve agriculture as 'human', Brown glibly

¹⁶ Compare with Houghton (1964: 74): '...[Rural Xhosa] are most reluctant to sell or slaughter their cattle, except for purposes of ritual. Instead of slaughtering them in their prime when they would give a good yield of meat they are kept until they die of old age or succumb in the next drought. Moreover the savings of the people are invested in yet more cattle...The money earned by the sweat and toil of labourers in mines and factories is continuously being poured into the bottomless pit created by their cattle complex.'

suggested (as have many other observers who preceded and followed him, see Lipton 1979) that, although the agricultural solutions were clear for all to see in white-dominated, commercial agriculture, the 'challenge' was the long-term transformation of the very nature of the black *man* and his social institutions (Brown 1971: 182; Page 1981: 386ff; Fraser 1991).

Thirdly, with white commercial agriculture on freehold land as his benchmark, Brown saw no value in drawing any comparisons with more successful agricultural practices in other reserve areas in South Africa or Southern Africa (see also Trollope 1976: 213). Comparative insights with potentially valuable lessons from development interventions implemented elsewhere were disregarded (see Nieuwenhuysen 1964b: 134ff). The freehold utopia was unattainable in the reserves given the obstacles posed by high population densities, the communal tenure regime and the poor resource management practices in place here.

Brown's politically sanitised characterisation of agriculture in the Ciskeian reserves found further expression in the explicitly modernist cattle production development initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s. By this time, despite the enormous credibility gap that haunted its leaders and bureaucrats, the Ciskei was already being characterised as a 'developing country' with national policies and priorities of its own (Rogers 1980; Ferguson 1997).¹⁷

In 1978, the Ciskei Commission chaired by G.D. Quail was set up by Sebe's Ciskei administration and given one year to investigate and advise on the Ciskei accepting 'independence' from South Africa (Quail 1980). Bekker (1980) reviewed their rather pragmatic methods of enquiry and their subsequent wide-ranging recommendations. The Commission clearly recognised that the Ciskei was economically unviable. It also noted the long-standing economic interdependence of the Ciskei and the rest of the (white-dominated) 'Border' region. Its report argued that the traditional economy

¹⁷ Daniel (1981: 16) quotes Venn (1978: 57), a white development consultant, as saying that 'one of the most urgent requirements [of the Ciskei] is to win the support of rural communities. Homeland leaders need their support'. Venn saw development projects [as] 'forming a bulwark against communism and leading to the creation of a middle class.' Ten years later, Fraser's 1991 doctoral thesis entitled, 'Agricultural Marketing in Less Developed Countries with special reference to Ciskei', still explicitly viewed the Ciskei as a separate country, finding a convenient fit with the international-recognised term, 'LDC'. This led Fraser to use such terms such the 'national herd' of the Ciskei when referring to all the cattle in the bantustan (Fraser 1991: 110).

of extensive farming, the communal land tenure system, the absence of able-bodied men, the 'blocked exit from agriculture' experienced by many rural people, as well as the resettlement of additional people into the Ciskei, created a 'low-level equilibrium trap' which only the termination of the migrant labour system would resolve (Quail 1980: 72).

Given this scenario, Quail distinguished between two different options of agricultural development. The first was a 'broad-based' approach that aimed to gradually raise 'farm productivity', by developing infrastructure, enhancing local cultivation practices and purchasing new seed varieties. This approach would also focus on inculcating improved cultivation and animal husbandry, extending credit and providing marketing facilities. However, the Ciskei held especially limited promise in this regard. It had only 30 extension officers who worked mostly with the newly established co-operatives. The 'abysmally low' agricultural productivity indices of the Ciskei reserves, the experts agreed, flowed from excessive population density, inefficient land use and low yields, even though the 'theoretical potential of Ciskei agriculture...[was] superior to that of adjoining white farming areas' (Quail 1980: 73). Again, many of the problems were deemed ultimately to be rooted in the 'human factor' and institutional incapacity.

The Ciskei Department of Agriculture was reckoned to have 'very limited executive capacity, with insufficient administrators, senior agricultural specialists and extension officers' (Quail 1980: 72).¹⁸ Compared with white farmers in the rest of South Africa, who enjoyed a 30-to-1 ratio of farmers to extension officers, in the Ciskei the figure was 320-to-1 (Quail 1980: 74; cf. De Wet & Leibbrandt 1991: 56ff).¹⁹

The second option for agricultural development was driven by the twin imperatives of giving the Ciskei a semblance of economic viability and of developing a 'class' of

¹⁸ In the period, 1972-1984, the department had no less than 8 Ministers and 9 Directors-General (De Beer 1986: 180). The department failed to publish an annual report in 1980/81 and again in 1981/82, while the 1979/80 annual report only appeared in 1983. Not that the Department failed to grow in size. In 1972, it had 5 directorates. By 1985, these had increased to 13. The casual approach to maintaining statistics on production levels has affected subsequent analyses of the sector. Fraser's table dealing with a 'Summary of animal and poultry products for 1983/84' has more gaps than actual figures on production (Fraser 1991: 123-4).

¹⁹ Obviously, this depended on how many of the rural inhabitants of the Ciskei were defined as 'farmers', a contentious point in itself.

commercial farmers. Only a few promising areas and a limited number of beneficiaries were selected for special attention. The capacity shortfalls in the Ciskei Department of Agriculture and Forestry would be taken up by various re-organised state corporations, that would oversee work done by firms of consultants managing new and existing 'show-piece' agricultural projects (Rogers 1980: 100ff).

The senior posts of the parastatals and their associated consultants were filled by white 'expatriate' South Africans, ex-Rhodesians and, at one stage, a few Israelis. This fact did not help the parastatals and their associated consultants in their relationship with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry (DAF) during the 1980s. Officials in the parastatals increasingly saw commercialisation in agriculture as occurring separately from the activities of the DAF and, indeed, separately from those of the mass of subsistence farmers in the villages of the Ciskei. From this lobby group, the Quail Commission heard self-serving arguments that the constraints 'holding down agricultural productivity in the Ciskei' could be significantly reduced in a short period, if an additional R17,5 million a year, over and above DAF's annual budget of R10 million, could be made available over three years to selected projects, including R5 million for livestock improvement.

The approach adopted by the newly constituted Ciskei Agricultural Corporation prioritised capital-intensive projects, notably the (further) development of five irrigation schemes and two pineapple estates. By design, these projects tended to concentrate resources and to benefit a relatively small number of people, with the goal of developing a core of *bona fide* commercial farmers in the Ciskei (Daniel 1981). While these projects provided negligible opportunities for employment and advancement, relative to the existing needs, their value to the Ciskeian and South African regimes lay in their contribution to rural political containment and to the all-important façade of hi-tech agricultural development and 'progress'. Politically, these projects formed part of a carrot-and-stick approach to 'development', whereby bantustan authorities rewarded compliant village communities and demonstrated to 'recalcitrant' rural people what fruits lay beyond their reach because of their opposition to the Ciskei regime (Green & Hirsch 1982: 82; Holbrook 1998).

The beneficiaries of these various projects included the few consulting firms that made a rather good living in the Ciskei (and other bantustans) in the period 1975-1994 (Daniel 1981; Holbrook 1992; Lelyveld 1985). The overall management of the Tyefu Irrigation Scheme in Peddie District, for instance, was placed under the managing consultants, Inter-Science Research and Development Services (Pty) Ltd.²⁰ The rather ambitious ‘long-run promise’ of these agents and of their parastatal minders, as quoted in the Quail Report, was of the ‘complete modernisation of Ciskei farming...[to] a level of productivity easily capable of supporting the homeland’s current [i.e. 1980] population’ (Quail 1980: 73). Contrariwise, Daniel (1981: 18) argued that the irrigation schemes contributed little to food production or the production of fodder for the cattle in the dryland regions of the Ciskei.

The promotion of cattle production and marketing in the Ciskei, 1972-1994

With two-thirds of the land area of the Ciskei bantustan suited to livestock production off the natural veld, livestock, and especially cattle, constituted a major component of the farming sector (Fraser 1991: 108). This reality did not prevent the authors of the National Development Plan for the water-deficient Ciskei from reaching the conclusion that, ‘...due to the low rainfall for dryland crop farming and the limited land resources for stock farming, farming under irrigation will be the mainstay of agriculture in the Ciskei of the future’ (Page 1981: 413). As local studies demonstrated, though, cultivation and livestock production continued to be integrally linked at village level, with a study conducted in the Amatola Basin finding that in the 1980/81 ploughing season 76% of the sampled households cultivated their land, and that nearly 80% of them did so solely by using cattle as draught power (De Wet 1985b: 101).

Cattle production in the reserves was underpinned partly by the extensive state-sponsored dipping programme that had been in place since 1904 in most reserve areas, though not without opposition from local people (Kepe 2002b). The ‘self-governing’ and later ‘independent’ Ciskei administration maintained the dipping programme, but less systematically. It was particularly the related function of using regular dipping episodes to keep track of cattle numbers that suffered after the late

²⁰ Other names such as Hill, Kaplan and Scott, as well as Loxton, Hunting and Associates and a group known as SA Farm Consultants, recur constantly in the grey literature. These teams of consultants churned out regular reports and plans on the schemes in which they were involved in the bantustans (Holbrook 1992; Keenan & Sarakinsky 1987).

1970s. Under 'Trust' tenure, i.e. land owned by the South African Development Trust, rights to grazing for six head of cattle were allocated to each family. By the end of the 1970s, a flat rate rental of R3 per year was apparently being charged, with an additional 25c per head of cattle over five (Page 1981: 247; De Wet 1980). This unpopular livestock tax was dropped after Ciskeian 'independence' in 1981.

The main thrust, however, in developing cattle production, was the drive to improve the cattle in reserve areas, through the supply of 'high-quality' bulls. The idea was to improve the beef-producing qualities of cattle, rather than their milk production or disease-resistance qualities, although dual-purpose (beef/dairy) cattle were also promoted. The rationale was that bigger and better-quality beef cattle would command better prices at stocksales and thus encourage cattle-owners to sell more animals. This would lead to a greater off-take of cattle, thereby easing pressure on the overgrazed rangelands.

The Department of Agriculture had launched a breeding scheme in the Ciskei reserves in 1949, subsidising the provision of 'improved' bulls (and the simultaneous removal of 'scrub' bulls). It proved a tangible, politically palatable and thus enduring feature of government policy. But rural people engaged with it on their own terms, withdrawing from the scheme when it no longer suited them. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the Ciskei department favoured the Brown Swiss as sires in the reserve areas (Brown 1971: 178). This much-criticised choice resulted from a national 'zoning of the communal areas' by a Professor Hamburger from the Department of Bantu Administration and Development in Pretoria, which declared the Brown Swiss ideal for conditions in the Ciskeian reserves (interview with J. Hundleby, 19 July 2001).²¹ The cattle were introduced through the unpopular Tribal Authority system, but as Steyn (1981: 25) noted, the breeds were not well-adapted to the area and most of them died soon after introduction, often succumbing to tick-borne diseases. This did not deter the authorities and between 1961 and 1970 the Department introduced a total of 901 bulls into the Ciskeian reserves. The programme was later deemed unsuccessful, because people tended to sell these bulls while they

²¹ Later, South Devon and Simmentaler breeds were promoted through the bull subsidy system. In 1978, some 400 bulls were distributed in the Ciskei, with South Devons constituting two-thirds of these (interview with J. Hundleby, 19 July 2001).

were still of 'serviceable' age. The bulls were not cared for properly when they were bought for the entire community, the method preferred by the Tribal Authorities. These problems notwithstanding, the Animal Husbandry Section persevered with the scheme, supplying a further 104 bulls to Ciskeian farmers in 1979/80 (Ciskei DAF Annual Report 1979/80).

Other than terse statements in the Department of Agriculture and Forestry's annual reports, little information is available on the impact of these schemes. I have not been able to locate any scientific papers on the number of bulls that would be needed to noticeably improve the beef qualities of village cattle or how this could best be achieved. It is not clear how such improvements would be measured in a systematic way, without expensive scientific performance testing that was unavailable to the authorities. Certainly it was recognised that unless all other 'scrub' bulls in the local communal grazing system were castrated or removed, the impact of the 'improved' bulls on improving the quality of local stock would be diluted (Beinart 1977: 134; Bembridge and Tapson 1993: 368). One local cattle specialist, Hundleby, argues that the introduction of large, dual-purpose (beef and dairy) breeds through the 'improvement' programmes, aimed at producing bigger-framed progeny, only aggravated the problem of low calving percentages and poor animal condition during the critical low forage periods (Hundleby n.d.: 4).

If the effects of the introduction of improved bulls remained largely unknown, clear damage was done to the relationship between government officials and rural cattle-owners resulting from the changing official notions of what genetic material was desirable in the 'reserve herds'. In earlier decades the state spent time and resources castrating and culling indigenous bulls (such as the *Nguni* and *Nkone* breeds and other 'nondescript' animals), but this sentiment changed over time. By the late 1970s, it was increasingly recognised that these smaller-framed more fertile breeds were in fact far better adapted to conditions in the reserve areas (for instance periodic grazing and water deficits and nightly kraaling regimes) than the introduced exotic breeds. When the Ciskei National Ranch was established in the early 1980s, two adapted breeds, the *Nguni/Nkone* and the *Bonsmara*, were vigorously promoted. Naturally, cattle-owners in the reserves were suspicious of these U-turns in official thinking, and Hundleby noted that there was 'consistently a problem with the perceptions of farmers in the communal

areas against the *Nguni* ' in the late 1970s and early 1980s (interview with J. Hundleby, 19 July 2001).

To promote the marketing of cattle out of the reserve areas, the Ciskeian Marketing Board, an off-shoot of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, entered into a joint venture with a private company, Cape Eastern Meats Co-operative, in 1978. Together they introduced a new livestock marketing system, known as the Ciskeian Livestock Marketing Board (CLB).²² The CLB provided a marketing system on a 'national' (i.e. Ciskei-wide) scale and, through the use of a weight/scale system, offered a guaranteed floor price for all economically saleable animals (see Fraser 1991: 132). After three years of operation, Gary Godden could glibly claim that the 'new scheme has been in operation for some time and is proving popular' (Godden in Page 1981: 405).

A close reading of the available documents suggests that none of these schemes was properly planned by the agricultural or marketing experts involved. The planners borrowed heavily and uncritically from similar earlier interventions in the Eastern Cape and elsewhere, in which 'livestock specialists' had been involved. There is a sense that the efforts in the late 1970s had to meet the unrealistic deadlines probably set by National Party and Ciskeian politicians who were desperate to make the 'independent' Ciskei bantustan a reality. In the course of this headlong rush, discredited theories like Rostow's 'stages of development' and the notion that Ciskeian farmers were 'only interested in numbers and not quality' (both in Page 1981), were recycled and used as the basis for planning in the Ciskei. The consultants appointed to manage the various schemes either genuinely bought into these 'development facts', or were simply incredibly cynical about the whole Ciskei bantustan project and were happy to be paid for services rendered and then to move on to the next assignment (see May 1991: 16; Tapscott 1992).

²² The Ciskei Marketing Board was established by the Ciskeian Marketing Act No.10 of 1976, to provide 'a Ciskeian organisation to regulate and control all matters concerning the production, processing and sale of agricultural products in the Ciskei.' The Board was to operate under the 'overall jurisdiction' of the Ciskeian Minister of Agriculture (Page 1981: 412). Elsewhere in his report, Page notes that in 1979/80 another parastatal, the Ciskei National Development Corporation (C.N.D.C.), was similarly involved in the sale of cattle, small stock and even milk (Page 1981: 269, 274).

The establishment of the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation (CAC) through the passing of the Ciskeian Corporation Act of 1981 resulted in the consolidation of the Ciskei Marketing Board, the Ciskei Livestock Marketing Board (CLB), Ciskei Agricultural Services, Ag Tek and the agricultural section of the Ciskei National Development Corporation (Fraser 1991: 129).²³ It is surprising then that by 1985 the CAC had a mere nine field officers involved in the marketing of all forms of surplus agricultural production, who had to service the entire bantustan. They conducted 'farmers' days' in order to acquaint rural people with the necessary skills in pricing, collection points, times of collection and advice on the preparation and presentation of agricultural products.

The Livestock Marketing Section of the CAC was responsible for the marketing of all livestock in the Ciskei bantustan, whether through private, 'out-of-hand' sales or the regular auction sales held throughout the reserve. By 1985, auction sales were being held regularly at 24 sale pens with an average of three sales per pen per year. A total of 9 sales were held in Peddie District in 1985 (Fraser 1991: 132, 255). The plan was to raise the annual off-take from the 'national herd', which was unknown but presumed to be less than 5% at the time, to 10% by 1980 and to 15% by the year 2000.²⁴ This would increase the value of livestock production and effect a reduction in the total livestock numbers towards the Ciskei's overall carrying capacity.

But this programme hit a number of snags. Stock sales were thick with suspicion and mistrust, and both rural cattle-owners and white buyers proved unreliable participants. CAC officials, as representatives of the bantustan regime, were frequently seen by local people as the enemy, intent on stripping them of their bovine wealth. 'Massive anti-CLB sentiment' was also expressed by local white speculators operating in Peddie District, who felt that the CLB (and later CAC) was cutting into their operations, which indeed it was (interview with J. Hundleby, 19 July 2001). In a rare evaluation of the CLB marketing initiative, Van Rooyen *et al.* (1981: 305) registered a number of telling observations. They argued that, in view of the skewed

²³ The CLB was finally incorporated into the CAC in September 1983.

²⁴ The reference to 1980 may have been a typographical error, i.e. it is possible that the target was 10% by 1990. Perhaps there was a perception that a focussed effort would yield substantial and immediate results, i.e. 10% off-take by 1980. Off-take rates for the Ciskeian reserves had been calculated by Benso (1976), at a mere 1.8%. In 1988, Fraser and Antrobus (1988: 273), cited in Antrobus *et al.* (1994: 20), estimated off-take to be 2.6% of the Ciskei 'national herd'.

ownership of cattle in the Ciskei, the programme would be directed at only a minority group of wealthier farmers who had sufficient cattle to sell. The problem they said seemed to be 'too few cattle owned by too many families'. To address this problem, they advocated that an economic value be placed on grazing rights, perhaps through the introduction of tradeable grazing rights. They argued further for the promotion of a 'substitution process' through which 'livestock farmers must change their preference for saving money in cattle to a preference for saving money at financial institutions' (Van Rooyen *et al.* 1981: 300). Achieving this would require 'an educational process and an economic rationale, in which cattle farmers were shown that the returns on capital invested in commercial and financial institutions are more attractive than the more risky returns on capital invested in livestock' (Van Rooyen *et al.* 1981: 300).²⁵

The economic rationality of the stock sale also unsettled the authorities. When too few cattle were offered for sale, the prices were high and buyers lost interest and threatened not to return. Conversely, on occasions when large numbers of stock were offered, prices were depressed and sellers proved reluctant, often after hard bargaining, to part with their animals (Fraser 1991: 133). Sellers did not like the fact that the selling price was settled in public, a process that allow everybody present to know the amount that they had received for their cattle. Sellers were accused of entering animals that they had no intention of selling and of using the stocksale to 'show off' their animals or to establish the current value of an animal they intended to sell 'out-of-hand' to a speculator or in the village afterwards. Buyers were known to blatantly organise 'buying rings' that saw them co-operating with each other to reduce the competition on the animals entered for sale.

But the Ciskei Development Plan was silent on these predictable obstacles and promised that 'modernisation' of the sector would proceed apace, with the 'training' of farmers high on the agenda. Improved cattle-breeding on a government-operated cattle-holding and breeding station would be possible through the purchase and introduction of 'expensive, highly bred exotic species' (Page 1981: 404). At least one

²⁵ Ironical then that earlier in their paper the authors quoted Fielder (1973) and acknowledged that the potential returns from investment in cattle (up to 15%) 'may be far more profitable, though more risky than a Post Office savings account, or even most industrial shares' (Van Rooyen *et al.* 1981: 295).

livestock extension centre was planned for the Ciskei, to provide demonstration facilities for improved animal breeding and feeding techniques.

At no point in the Development Plan is there any acknowledgement of the fact that the Ciskei authorities had a woeful grasp on aggregate agricultural production output for the sectors in which they wished to intervene. They relied on consultants' reports with data gleaned from outdated NAD documents. They also referred to village-level surveys conducted by the University of Fort Hare and made out-of-context reference to dated ethnographies (such as Hunter 1936) to corroborate their 'research findings' or justify their approach (cf. May 1991).²⁶ The advent of the DBSA-sponsored 'Ciskei Development Information' files in 1985 did little to appreciably improve the quality of the data available. The introductory so-called 'Concise Description' section of the Agriculture and Mining report (Section 7) notes that, 'due to the incompleteness of the available data, a total production figure and the gross value of production cannot be given...[and] it is very difficult to describe the impact or the role of the private and subsistence farmers and co-operatives in Ciskei agriculture due to the unavailability of data...' (DBSA 1985: 2). Nor were there any signs of a gradual improvement in this regard.

The Ciskei National Ranch

Although other sites were mooted, the Ciskei National Ranch (measuring some 23,162 ha) was set up in the south-eastern corner of Peddie District, on high-quality land that had previously been white-owned farmland under freehold tenure.²⁷ By August 1980, an extensive block of land of some 50,000 ha in Peddie South had been ceded to the Ciskei as a result of the consolidation of the Ciskei's boundary, and the affected white farmers who had their land expropriated were compensated. Much concern was expressed about the deterioration of this prime agricultural land 'as a

²⁶ In their paper, 'An economic evaluation of cattle marketing in less developed agricultures with special reference to the Ciskei', Van Rooyen *et al.* (1981: 299) were forced to admit that '[F]ormal and empirically observed data is [sic] scarce and still difficult to obtain but some conclusions can be drawn and trends established from available information and evidence of the practical situation in the Ciskei as well as from available information on comparable situations in other LDCs [Less Developed Countries]'.

²⁷ In their Fish/Kat River Basins Study (Volume 3a), Loxton *et al.* (1982) recommended setting up two national ranches, one at Bira (Peddie South) and another at Tukulu, south-west of the town of Alice. It seems that the latter proposal was never implemented and the Bira Ranch became known as the Ciskei National Ranch.

result of neglect, squatting, theft, vandalism, poaching, etc.’, and one of the urgent steps required was to bring these farms under ‘effective Ciskei Government control’ (Loxton *et al.* 1980).

The Integrated Rural Development Plan in Peddie South District, as approved by the Ciskeian cabinet in March 1982, included the development of mixed pineapple-livestock operations and the National Ranch. Loxton, Hunting and Associates, who had developed the plan, were appointed as consultants and managers of the project. In 1984, the recently established CAC assumed responsibility for all agricultural developments in Peddie South. The Plan envisaged establishing 50 ‘yeoman’ (pineapple-livestock) farmers, farming on about 100 ha each, with a target net income of R6,000 per farmer per annum. This scheme would create 2,100 (seasonal) jobs. The target net income for the envisaged 1,000 ‘commercial’ farmers was set at R2,400 to R3,000 per annum, with estimates that this scheme would create 5,000 jobs. Six community farms were to be established in collaboration with the six Tribal Authorities in the area. Central Servicing Units would serve as the developmental hub at each of the various settlement schemes (Loxton *et al.* 1980).²⁸

The National Ranch, for its part, also had three distinct components. One was the provision of ‘store cattle’ to the above-mentioned settlement schemes on a ‘grazier scheme’ basis. The second component was to develop the national herd, which led to the building up of two registered stud herds, *Bonsmara* and (later) *Nguni*, over the course of nearly a decade. The idea was that these animals would be distributed to farmers across the Ciskei to improve the overall quality of their herds. The performance-tested *Nguni* herd in particular, which consisted of 700-800 animals by 1993, was regarded as ‘one of the three best *Nguni* stud herds in South Africa’ (interview with J. Hundleby, 19 July 2001). The third component of the Ranch was the holding ranch (one portion of which was on the outlying farm of Loverstwest), where, for a fee, cattle owned by local people were fattened for a period of 3 to 6 months before (theoretically) being sold on to abattoirs or feedlots. To kickstart this third component, in what was regarded as a temporary measure, speculating in cattle

²⁸ In 1991, it was admitted that the three pineapple farming settlement schemes comprising 10 families each on a total of 420 ha had proven to be unworkable and the project reverted to ‘estate farming’ managed by CAC.

by the National Ranch itself was envisaged, i.e. no more and no less than 'buying thin animals, fattening them and selling them' (Loxton *et al.* 1980: 67). The idea was that some 20% of the cows purchased would prove to be suitable for retention as breeding stock and that orthodox breeding would 'gradually displace' speculating as the main production activity on the Ranch. The animals would be sold at the regular stock sales held in the area to auctioneers, butchers and the two large feedlots in the area.

In 1982 the projected costs of the National Ranch, excluding housing and the purchase of livestock, were estimated at R1 million. Loxton *et al.* (1982: 43-44) indicated optimistically that, with a herd of 3,850 animals and based on the sale of 1,440 cattle every year, the operation would turn a modest net profit of R102,500 per annum. Given its grander designs, the promise of turning any profit was seen in a positive light by the Ciskeian authorities.

The Ciskei National Ranch got underway in 1984, a year which also marked the end of the devastating drought that had ravaged the Ciskei bantustan. The first task was to fence the consolidated farms, where infrastructure had deteriorated markedly in the preceding four years. The scheme started with 1,500 cattle. About 1,000 cattle per annum were supplied to the abattoir in Port Elizabeth. Their straightforward approach was to sell 500 head of cattle and then buy in another 500 from local black farmers (interview with C. Snyman, 15 March 2001).

When the breeding herds were established, the distribution of improved stock to the local cattle farmers began. The Department of Agriculture would buy about 40 heifers from the scheme and then resell them to individual farmers in the neighbouring villages at a 30-40% subsidy. The number of heifers supplied to farmers increased steadily. In the year to May 1989, 777 heifers were sold to 283 Ciskeian farmers for R470 each, which represented a 30% subsidy and was regarded as 'very affordable for an adapted weaner heifer' (CAC Annual Report 1988/89). Then things began to speed up. In October 1989, it was reported that 2,575 breeding heifers were supplied to Ciskeian farmers during the preceding 17-month period. In the five months up to end of October 1989, a monthly average of 317 heifers had been sold. The National Ranch, it was felt, was fulfilling its mandate. It was suggested that CAC's breeding herd would 'stabilise' at 3,300 cows. This would allow 740 heifers to be sold to local

farmers through the subsidy scheme, so that ‘thousands of heifers’ were sold into the villages of Peddie District, with local people ‘lining up’ to buy heifers (interview with C. Snyman, 15 March 2001). Christo Snyman, a manager at the National Ranch from 1984, claimed that once the two stud herds were developed, for every 300 *Nguni* heifers produced per year, about 200 would end up in the neighbouring villages, such as Wesley, Benton and other villages adjacent to the Ranch. Such was the demand locally for animals that the beneficiaries of this scheme were virtually all Peddie people. Few of the ‘improved’ cattle from the National Ranch were distributed to farmers in other parts of the Ciskei, with the costs of transporting animals a disincentive in this regard.

However, the National Ranch (and CAC in general) ran foul of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, ostensibly because of weak auditing controls and poor accounting. Snyman suggested that officials in DAF were jealous of the National Ranch’s success. But the financial problems ran deeper than jealousy. In 1987, concerns over financial controls saw the entire marketing function of CAC transferred to the newly established Ciskei Farmers Co-operative. The activities of the CAC Head Office were rationalised and further changes in 1988 resulted in a shake-up of the Board of Directors and the appointment of a new managing director for CAC. Satisfied with the tighter financial controls put into place, senior CAC management made the decision to increase the breeding herd on the National Ranch to 4,000 animals. This would enable the supply of 900 quality weaner heifers and 120 ‘superior sires’ per annum to the farmers of the Ciskei.

With a policy shift towards privatisation in the late 1980s, some 4,275 ha of farmland, leased out to ‘underperforming’ 19 yeoman and commercial farmers in the ‘initial’ period, were re-appropriated and carved up into roughly 500 ha blocks. It was envisaged that these farms would be sold off to ten (later 18) ‘emerging’ black farmers by the end of 1991.²⁹ Prior to this, the farmers displaced in the process would have to be provided with some of the land presently farmed by CAC.

²⁹ These new farms were never registered with the Surveyor-General in Cape Town and do not appear on a cadastral map. In this sense they do not exist officially and, as of December 2001, despite the government’s land reform programme entering its seventh year, the ownership of this valuable land remains unresolved.

With unions such as the Food and Allied Workers' Union beginning to organise workers in the Ciskei in the early 1990s, CAC management decided to remove the last of the former caretakers, farm employees and other farm dwellers from the CAC pineapple and cattle farms. This would casualise their labour-force and minimise the threat of disruption through union-inspired industrial action and political 'unrest'. These people were either moved by the CAC to nearby villages or they simply invaded adjacent farms. The nearby settlements swelled, increasing competition for daily waged labour on the pineapple plantations and for the available grazing for their livestock.

Subsequent to the coup which toppled President-for-Life Lennox Sebe in 1989, violence escalated in the Ciskei. Considerable damage was done by local people who looted and vandalised the offices and equipment of the CAC in Peddie South, from which the project never recovered. The ensuing lawlessness saw cattle being stolen from the Ranch. In 1992, it was reported that CAC had suffered over R769,000 worth of damage in burnt cars, tractors, equipment and buildings. Later that year, the CAC was given a 'firm directive' by the Ciskei Government to move out of production and to transfer forthwith all land under its management to Ciskeian citizens. As a result, the Livestock Section at Peddie Coast (the National Ranch) sold the bulk of its herd, retrenched most of its workers and privatised its farms. By March 1993, 67 workers and 3 salaried staff had been retrenched. The *Nguni* Stud was reduced from 1,100 to 500 and the remaining animals were moved to Woodlands farm in Peddie District, where seven workers and one manager were retained to safeguard this valuable herd as an interim measure.³⁰

By 1994, the National Ranch had been ignominiously closed down. The *Bonsmara* stud herd was sold to a retired senior Ciskei bureaucrat, S.N. Manjezi. He has since become a recognised breeder and respected commercial farmer. The *Nguni* stud was split and subsequently dispersed, amid great acrimony, to the University of Fort Hare, Fort Cox Agricultural College and Döhne Agricultural Research station (all in the Eastern Cape). More than 70 *Nguni* stud cattle died after they were allegedly poisoned by local people just prior to being removed. Accusations of theft were rife during the winding up of all the Peddie South projects – a process that dragged on into 1996 – especially since some

³⁰ White buyers travelled considerable distances to avail themselves of this sale of quality *Nguni* cattle.

of the best stud bulls were said to have simply 'disappeared'. Several of the CAC employees were implicated in the controversially drawn-out official investigation that followed. This embittered many of the individuals involved and cast a shadow over what had been a significant commitment of public resources and a sustained effort on the part of those involved over a ten-year period.

The Ciskei National Ranch epitomised the supply-driven, state-led development of late modernism, apartheid-style. But in spite of its rational scientific, technicist and depoliticising approach to development, the National Ranch was an integral part of the political illegitimacy that enveloped the Ciskei (cf. Anonymous 1989; Dennie 1992: 86). It could never shake off the fact that local cattle-owners regarded it with suspicion, even while they sought to purchase increasing numbers of cattle at subsidised prices from it. Its managers were white men who, despite controlling vast herds of cattle and swathes of prized grazing land, did not conform to the Xhosa cultural role of big men. The managers' credibility vis-à-vis the local villagers was undermined by the fact that, while projecting a slavish respect for abstract budgets and ever-present financial constraints, several of them were part-time farmers or speculators who bought cattle from the Ranch from time to time, either for themselves or for white farmer friends outside the Ciskei.³¹ The key issue was that the Ranch monopolised valuable grazing land that local people had believed they would gain control over as one benefit of Ciskeian 'independence'. An continuous battle to keep the cattle (and especially the 'scrub' and diseased bulls) of neighbouring communities out of the National Ranch poisoned the relationship. Lastly, local people were irked by the questionable bureaucratic process which apparently permitted only a few well-connected individuals to gain access to 'commercial' farms on the Peddie South scheme.

The National Ranch struggled to establish the particular merits of its approach to state-led livestock development. Criticism came from influential local observers, like Dave Tapson, director of the Agriculture and Rural Development Research Institute (ARDRI) at the University of Fort Hare in the early 1980s, chairman of the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation between 1982 and February 1986, and later a senior policy

³¹ This dealing in cattle on the part of employees compelled the CAC to issue a directive about the conditions under which its own employees were allowed to buy cattle from the National Ranch.

analyst at the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA). Tapson's own research in the Transkei and KwaZulu bantustans led him to advocate a 'leave well enough alone' policy in respect of the production and marketing of cattle there. Much to the dismay of agricultural specialists in the various bantustan governments, he showed that functional marketing systems existed in the 'complete absence of permits, slaughter control, price-setting, subsidy and bureaucracy' (Tapson 1982: 20; cf. Tapson 1990).

Moreover, by the mid-1980s, the Development Bank of Southern Africa had established itself as the primary source of funding for agricultural development interventions in the bantustans, including the Ciskei.³² When approached by CAC in 1985 for loan financing for its livestock projects, DBSA officials expressed reservations about the allegedly unclear objectives of the Ciskei livestock development initiatives, the high potential for duplication with other projects, and the fact that the projects represented interference with the free market. They required a more convincing motivation why CAC should conduct these projects rather than the private sector. DBSA officials were even unconvinced of the demand for improved sires in the Ciskei. Instead they argued that the market should be allowed to iron out anomalies like the provision of quality bulls in areas where they were needed. They argued that sufficient demand in the reserves would induce white farmers outside the Ciskei to bring their surplus bulls to the market for sale. In contrast to this 'enlightened' perspective, CAC officials were motivated, certainly in the period 1984-1990, by the pressing if deluded objective of developing a viable 'national' agricultural sector for the Ciskei. They viewed white 'RSA' farmers and consumers, not as functional partners in a common economy, but primarily as 'export' markets for the surplus output of the National Ranch.

³² The DBSA was established by the Nationalist government to, among other things, provide financing for capital projects in 'self-governing' and 'independent' states in Southern Africa (Tapscott 1992). This allowed bantustans to turn to the Bank rather than the apartheid state itself for financial assistance and technical expertise. This relieved the state of some of the pressure of the enormous central planning juggernaut that it had created to manage the bantustans. It also assisted bantustan regimes to deflect the criticism that they were wholly in the pocket of the Pretoria regime. In the process, however, the development sector became a partly-privatised industry in South Africa, underwriting a whole set of often dubious (white) 'development experts'. From the mid-1980s, these 'experts' proceeded to gorge themselves on the carcass of apartheid, facilitated by the multitudinous 'research' and 'development' contracts issued by the DBSA as the latter oversaw, in rather bureaucratic and very costly fashion, the convoluted demise of the entire 'independent' bantustan project.

It is likely that, for senior DBSA officials, the funding of livestock development projects was unattractive for their potential to raise the ire of entrenched Afrikaner political interests in the conservative South African meat industry. Whatever the case, their response to proposals of this nature was so obscure as to be labyrinthine (Tapscott 1992). One example of this politicking was the 'negotiations' around the proposal for a DBSA-funded abattoir to be built for the Ciskei at Zwelitsha, at which officials from the South African Meat Board (SAMB) insisted that, 'because of the differences in [operating] standards and therefore overheads, it would be unfair to import meat, slaughtered at a C grade facility, into the RSA [sic] where an A grade abattoir operates [in East London]... As a result, the Abattoir Corporation (ABAKOR) would be likely to resist the importation of meat from the Ciskei.'

Despite the political machinations typical of the red-meat industry (see Karaan *et al.* 1993), the local economy and cattle-owners in Peddie District certainly benefited from the activities of the National Ranch. It is widely recognised that the National Ranch had a positive impact on the quality of cattle in the adjacent villages. Many local people readily attributed this improvement to the subsidised sale of breeding stock by the National Ranch and were keen to see a similar programme re-instituted. The superior quality of local cattle also sustained the interest of speculators who buy cattle in the area to the present day. The question of whether the methods adopted were necessarily the best or the most effective use of the funds expended is quite another matter.

Ultimately, the National Ranch and other CAC initiatives were 'parachuted' into these areas for political reasons and at significant cost to the South African tax-paying public. In the process, they disrupted the allegedly exploitative yet long-standing practices and relationships of exchange that had existed between white farmers and speculators and cattle farmers in the reserves. The most serious problem that CAC and its National Ranch never came close to addressing was the pressure on grazing resources in the communal villages of Peddie District. In fact, they added to this problem by occupying scarce grazing land and by subsidising the purchase of adapted, more fertile heifers by rural people. However, their efforts to increase the off-take of cattle from communal rangelands by offering a 'floor price' for cattle sold at stock sales were insufficient incentive to induce the majority of cattle-owners to

abandon their extra-economic reasons for keeping cattle and to become market-oriented producers of beef.

By 1994, CAC itself was in serious trouble. Some staff had already opted to accept transfers to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry in the Ciskei. With the publicity surrounding the incoming ANC government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), parastatals like CAC were desperate to cast themselves in a positive light and quickly adopted 'RDP-speak'. Thus the CAC began to tackle adult literacy, to facilitate the building of crèches and primary schools and to promote brick-making, knitting and sewing projects in Peddie South. At the same time, increasingly fraught negotiations were being conducted with other bantustan parastatals and the new provincial government to determine the shape of a new provincial agricultural development entity.

In 1997, the CAC was officially consigned to the scrapheap of history and its staff either retired or resigned to become private consultants. Regrettably, the few valuable institutional lessons that might have been gleaned during the nearly 12 years of its existence, most relating to the intricacies of how illegitimate and/or weak governments should *not* centrally plan, undertake and manage agricultural development projects, were neither learned nor documented. Instead, the same ideas have resurfaced, remarkably unchanged, in the livestock development rhetoric and programmes of the post-1994 Eastern Cape provincial government.

Developments in the post-1994 Eastern Cape Province

The ANC-led government has consistently shown that it views agriculture as a conservative, technologically backward and marginal sector of the economy. This comes through most strongly in the miniscule budget allocated to land reform, arguably one of the most politically explosive issues in Southern Africa over the past decade. The government's main response to serious underdevelopment and poverty in the former bantustans has been to radically expand the coverage of its social welfare programme (see below). The welfare economy is funded by national government but is administered by the nine provincial governments. By putting so much money into social welfare, government could be accused of undermining its own efforts and those

of other organisations that are aimed at promoting local economic development and intensified agricultural production, especially directed towards achieving greater food-security at the household level.

In the struggle for resources in the 'new' South Africa, public agricultural services have fared poorly. Government has decided that the state had encroached into areas of agriculture that could be financed and facilitated by the private sector. As with most other provinces, the Eastern Cape provincial Department of Agriculture (ECDA) is severely cash-strapped. This is the way that the National Treasury would apparently prefer to keep it, given well-founded concerns about the capacity of provincial departments to manage and spend their budgets. Recurring expenditure on personnel costs consumes around 94% of the ECDA's annual budget, even though the department has insufficient staff to perform its constitutionally derived mandates (ECDA Strategic Framework 2000/2001). Consequently, even if it had a workable plan to do so, the Department has very little in the way of real resources that it can use to develop agriculture in the former reserve areas (Nel & Davies 1999). As a result, the Department continues to rely somewhat begrudgingly on external consultants, many of them schooled in the bantustan institutions and the DBSA during the 1980s.

The collection of basic statistics on agricultural production (a minimum prerequisite for rigorous planning and administration in the agricultural sector) is still regarded as an unaffordable luxury. In respect specifically of agriculture in the former bantustans, government has taken up a cheerleading role, exhorting farmers to form 'commodity associations' that can promote the 'commercialisation of agriculture' and to which it can make development funding available. But government officials lack both the financial resources and the business acumen to facilitate any commercialisation of agriculture, except on the tiniest of scales.

In the period 1994-2001, the Eastern Cape provincial government failed to table a comprehensive livestock development plan. This is not surprising, though, because it has also failed to table an overall White Paper on Agriculture. In the absence of a White Paper, the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture has developed into a knee-jerk '*ad hoc*cracy', where every whim and fancy of the publicity-seeking Member of

the Provincial Executive (MEC), the political head of the Department, is the latest 'project' to be adopted.

In the absence of any substantially new articulation of development objectives by the provincial government, some old programmes have continued, at least on paper. The decades-old Bull and Ram Leasing Schemes continue under the banner of the 'Livestock Scheme'. The state-subsidised dipping programme and efforts to market cattle out of rural villages both continue, albeit haphazardly. Micro-development projects, supposedly aimed at establishing rural enterprises, especially 'piggery and poultry' projects, are unimaginatively sponsored on a one-off basis by several provincial government departments. The cash-strapped Eastern Cape Development Corporation, which emerged from the restructuring of the Transkei and Ciskei's various development corporations, flies the neo-liberal flag and has busied itself writing 'business plans' for a wide range of enterprises, including one for the commercialisation of beef production in the former bantustans. Its initiatives in this regard have met with no notable successes to date.

A United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded programme that was launched in September 2000 involved stimulating rural markets across a range of agricultural commodities. The Agribusiness Linkage Programme (Agri-Link) set about organising stocksales in selected areas of the former bantustans in the Eastern Cape, in conjunction with a local livestock-marketing company. In the period October 2000 to September 2001, Agri-Link facilitated 109 rural stocksales that realised the sale of 6,300 cattle. Agri-Link also organised individual sales of cattle to reputable buyers, and in the first six months of operations facilitated the sale of a further 617 cattle (ARD 2001). Agri-Link was partnered by the Agricultural Research Council which, among other things, made 19 wholly subsidised *Nguni* bulls available for distribution to rural areas in the Eastern Cape, some of them sponsored to projects in the villages adjacent to my research sites.

By providing more resources and better on-the-ground organisational capacity, Agri-Link facilitated 25 stocksales in Peddie District during the calendar year of 2001.

This was up from 12 sales that took place during 1999.³³ The number of cattle sold during 2001 was more than double the number sold during 1999, at least at organised stocksales. News of the higher prices paid at these stocksales spread in the district and may well have encouraged people to sell some of their older, non-reproductive stock (a practice known as 'target selling'). Buyers came from as far afield as the Free State and sales were competitive and brisk. It is probable, however, that the increased sales were 'distress sales' that related more to the deepening poverty which forced men to 'turn to their kraals' in order to feed their families. Sales, informants told me, was also linked to the higher stock numbers after six years of good rains. This allowed people to sell some cattle, for instance, old cows with tick-damaged udders, without compromising the growth potential of their herds. The higher prices offered and the approach taken by the Agri-Link facilitators were viewed in a positive light by cattle owners, who appreciated the persuasion used by these facilitators to push up the prices offered by buyers.

By 2002, however, villagers had apparently disposed of all the old and unproductive animals from their herds, and sought to retain their remaining breeding stock. As a result, the numbers of animals on offer at these Agri-Link-facilitated sales declined. Buyers' interest declined correspondingly and, with fewer buyers, prices were less attractive to sellers, so fewer sales were concluded. At the same time, the established white speculators in Peddie District were unhappy about having their own buying disrupted by the Agri-Link stocksales or resented being chided by the (black) Agri-Link field staff into paying more than they would usually pay for local 'trade' cattle. By the end of 2002, however, the Agri-Link programme collapsed dramatically, allegedly because of the misappropriation of funds by individuals in the Pretoria head-office of the U.S. firm that was managing the programme on behalf of USAID.

In Peddie District, a solitary speculator, linked to a local feedlot situated near East London, moved in to fill the vacuum left by Agri-Link. Yet again, an initiative had been started and, although it appeared to be relatively successful in the short run, it was unable to sustain the momentum. Again, it seemed destined to fail because it operated without a full appreciation of rural people's myriad uses of cattle and of the

³³ A change in the marketing agents organising the stocksales in 2000 disrupted the sale of cattle during that year.

intrinsically cyclical nature of cattle production and selling in the former bantustan rural areas.

Conclusions

The question I set out to explore in this dissertation is why cattle have remained attractive to rural people in areas like Peddie District. Here, I have provided some historical context of the past seven decades that begins to answer this question. The ‘cattle economy’ in particular offers a clear challenge to the ‘dual economy’ characterisation of the South African economic landscape. As part of this challenge, I provided examples to demonstrate how the long-term developments in the agrarian sector of the Ciskei reserves, and later the Ciskei bantustan, were intimately tied to wider changes in the South African political economy.

In the first place, I argued that it is significant in terms of cattle production by rural people that the former reserve areas of the Eastern Cape Province remain subject to modified forms of communal tenure. Following the opposition to Betterment Planning, the apartheid government in the 1960s shied away from effecting major changes to the way the communal tenure system worked in places like Peddie District. This belated ‘hands-off’ approach allowed rural people virtually unlimited, and increasingly unregulated, access to communal grazing resources, albeit under conditions of rapid human population growth and thus congestion in the reserves. Critical in this regard was the illegal and highly contested use cattle-owners made of ‘released’ land, i.e. formerly white-owned farms, often adjacent to their villages (see Ainslie 1998). This took pressure off the more heavily grazed rangeland resources in the reserve villages. Access to these grazing resources on freehold land was particularly important during the protracted drought of 1982-84.³⁴

Secondly, although agricultural support under the Ciskei was sub-standard and inconsistent, the free dipping programme was sustained as part of a state-provided animal health regime, as were vaccinations and inoculations against local bovine diseases, quite probably at the instruction of the apartheid authorities. These

³⁴ To some extent, as arable production declined the local area available for grazing increased, but the absence of crop stover for the winter season had a negative effect on livestock condition.

interventions subsidised the costs of owning cattle, which was particularly important during the economically tough 1970s and 1980s.

Thirdly, in Peddie District at least, the Ciskei National Ranch and the related CAC activities of subsidising the provision of adapted breeding stock to rural people and of maintaining a floor price for cattle offered at stock sales ensured that cattle remained readily convertible to cash, and thus a useful component of the livelihood portfolios of many households.

Lastly, although the Ciskei bantustan offered greater opportunities for unskilled people to find temporary work, the chronic lack of alternative investment opportunities for rurally-based people inclined them to continue to look to cattle as a viable store of wealth, notwithstanding the risks involved.

So, while the mantra of the state has consistently been that cattle production in the reserves should become more efficient to relieve pressure on the overstocked communal rangelands, contradictory policy and programme interventions undermined this. Moreover, rural people have consistently sought to engage with both the state and the market on their own terms and in ways that enhanced their local accumulation strategies. In the next chapter, I consider how households in Peddie District have struggled to secure their livelihoods in the changing regional economy.

CHAPTER FOUR

Constructing ‘Rural’ Livelihoods in Peddie District

Livelihood is never just a matter of finding or making shelter, transacting money, and preparing food to put on the table or exchange in the market place. It is equally a matter of the ownership and circulation of information, the management of relationships, the affirmation of personal significance and group identity, and the interrelation of each of those tasks to the other. All these productive tasks together constitute the work of livelihood (Wallman 1984: 22-3).

Introduction

By livelihoods, I mean livelihood strategies and activities that taken together keep households above a notional ‘household subsistence level’ (however problematic this concept is), i.e. able to feed, clothe, shelter and educate their members, and to enjoy a minimum level of social interaction with their fellow villagers (see Monde [2003] and Ellis’ definition quoted in Chapter Two of this dissertation). Moreover, I define ‘rural livelihoods’ as any livelihoods that contribute to the well-being of rurally-based homesteads and their members (see Ardington & Lund 1996: 35). Since many livelihood strategies in Peddie District were essentially urban-derived, I place the ‘rural’ in rural livelihoods in inverted commas.

Constructing livelihoods, in the sense that these activities require people to make choices between alternatives, encompasses negotiation over the nature of people’s consumption patterns, and is informed by their social resources and their cultural and material preferences.¹ These negotiations took place on a daily basis both *within* the households of Peddie District and *between* each household and its wider social networks of kin, neighbours, friends, as well as the various institutions of the state and the market. Gudeman (2001: 22) characterises this as rural people’s having to manage the complex ‘dialectics of community and market...[or]...the tension between keeping identity and the base [on the one hand], and spreading ties to others [through exchange] and accumulating capital [on the other].’

¹ Labour availability, a crucial element of people’s decision-making between livelihood options, hinges on a range of factors including household structure and the health status of household members (see Kepe 2002a: 94).

While the residents of rural Peddie District had long been accustomed to continually adapting their livelihood strategies to changing circumstances in their local environments (for example, in response to drought), they also had to adapt these livelihoods to significant changes in the wider political economy. In trying, ultimately, to account for why cattle ownership continued to be attractive to rural people, it was significant (although not surprising) that their overall repertoire of livelihood strategies was mediated locally by cultural norms, expectations and practices, including the division of labour along the lines of gender and generation. In addition, growing structural unemployment placed new demands on rural households, for instance, in making the issue of each individual's educational achievement, and the overall educational profile of the household, more important than before.

I analyse some of the workings of the 'rural' household economy in Peddie District. In particular, I provide an analysis of the ways in which and the extent to which cash and material resources that derived from elsewhere, such as from extra-village sources, were incorporated into and diffused through the rural sector, in the context of people's everyday consumption, accumulation and investment activities. In essence, I argue that in the context of dire poverty there continued to be rather limited scope for investment in assets that were both easily convertible and reliable over the longer term in either rural or urban areas (see Monde 2003). This singular fact underpinned the surprisingly high levels of population mobility of people and goods between town and country, even though it was nearly twenty years since the repeal of apartheid-era legislation that restricted the free movements of African people between town and countryside. The lack of a range of convertible reliable assets also helps to explain why people chose to maintain and even increase their investments in particular types of trusted and social assets, notably livestock, in rural areas like Peddie District, as opposed to investing in other, perhaps town-based, assets (cf. Schmidt 1992; Ngwane 2003).

In the interests of brevity, my review of some of the methodological challenges in studying 'rural' livelihoods appears as Appendix One of this dissertation. Therein I review the much-criticised concept of the 'household', and discuss the character of the Peddie District version of the typical Xhosa '*umzi*' [homestead], and some of the implications of the ways it was culturally constructed. I also examine some of the difficulties of conducting research into livelihoods. To situate my ethnographic

material in the Eastern Cape's former bantustans as a whole, I review the relevant literature on 'rural' livelihoods. I explore whether rural households actually were reliant on a diverse range of livelihoods and I argue that the 'groundswell of livelihood diversification' (Bryceson 2002: 726) should not be assumed to hold universally in rural Africa, but must be empirically demonstrated at the household level, ideally – as Bryceson notes – on the basis of longitudinal data (Bryceson 2002: 730).² Part of the confusion arises, I suggest, because of a lack of precision in the livelihoods terminology currently in use, and I review some key definitions used in the literature (see Ellis 2000). Again, in an effort to be as succinct as possible in this chapter, I have placed this discussion, which relates to the content of this chapter, in Appendix One.

It is self-evident that rural households in Peddie District sought constantly to 'match their uneven and unstable incomes to [their] continuous household consumption needs' to buffer themselves against livelihood vulnerability (Ellis 2000: 58,62). Ellis argues that a key means of achieving this buffer is through a 'substitution between assets and between activities', i.e. by exchanging one type of asset for another type, in the hope that the asset type secured will be more profitable (either in terms of reliability or the extent of the returns derived or both) over the long-term (Ellis 2000: 238). In rural Peddie District, this substitution happened all the time and took the form of, for instance, exchanging labour for wages, wages for cattle, or substituting cattle for money to pay for the costs of a child's education, or by the making of cash, in-kind or labour contributions towards the hosting of a ritual event. Substitutions of this nature converted these resources into social networks of support and reciprocity that were aimed at buffering livelihood vulnerability in future. Cash was, as virtually everywhere, the most readily convertible of all assets, but this property could be either beneficial or problematic, depending on the context (Fraser *et al.* 2003: 173; Shipton 1989).

² Of the three Eastern Cape case-studies in the influential DARE programme (see Chapter Two) only McAllister's (1999, 2001) case-study had access to longitudinal data and arguably throws up more anomalies because of it (see Bryceson 2002: 728-733). This should serve as a caution about the extent to which generalisations about social change in the Eastern Cape countryside, such as the rise of women as the 'new custodians of *isiXhosa* tradition' (Bank & Qambata 1999: 119, 126), can be made.

In the first section below, I explore the impact of two bundles of livelihoods, i.e. the social welfare economy and the ‘jobbing’ economy in rural Peddie District. I suggest that by the late 1990s, the social welfare (grant) economy had matured to the extent that old-age pensions and disability grants had become the acknowledged livelihood mainstay of a large proportion of rural households. Simultaneously, macro-economic policies put in place by the post-apartheid government have seen real prospects for long-term regular employment decline across the board, and become especially bleak for poorly educated rural people. This brought the practice of ‘jobbing’ to the fore. ‘Jobbing’ was a local term that describes the short-term piece-work employment that was increasingly the only work available to many rural people. With wage work scarce, opportunities for ‘jobbing’ on community projects were hotly contested in rural villages. I argue that social welfare disbursements that did not keep pace with inflation and intermittent ‘jobbing’ opportunities as *dominant* livelihood sources have both had a deleterious effect on the longer-term livelihood security of many households in Peddie District. For one thing, the increased contribution of the welfare economy to ‘rural’ livelihoods has resulted in a contraction in remittances and an increase in household dependency ratios. Moreover, irregular income for rural households, through ‘jobbing’ rather than remittances or local regular wage work, will seriously undermine longer-term household projects of accumulation.

In the second section of this chapter, I account for the different livelihood strategies adopted by individual households in Hamburg and Loversttwist as people attempted to secure more resilient livelihoods. I show how the educational levels of their constituent members worked to narrow their options in this regard. Notwithstanding some notable variation, the overall pattern was that most of these households had a rather limited range of livelihood options – given their limited overall command of assets and the poor convertibility of their available assets, such as unskilled labour – with which to realise the conversion between assets and between activities that was key to establishing and maintaining resilient livelihoods. This is similar to the extremely marginal livelihoods that Monde (2003) found in neighbouring Alice District.

Changes in 'rural' livelihoods in Peddie District

Livelihoods in rural Peddie District exhibited a limited range of *dominant* livelihood strategies at household and village level (Ainslie *et al.* 1997).³ These *dominant* livelihood strategies were: (i) entitlements to social welfare pensions⁴ and grants; (ii) remittances; (iii) local and commuter formal employment, such as that of teachers, policemen, nurses, municipal workers; and (iv) local informal 'jobbing' (Ainslie 1999; cf. Kepe 2002a: 88ff).

As documented elsewhere in rural South Africa, these four *dominant* livelihood strategies were commonly supplemented by the widespread use of natural resources, both productive use, i.e. agricultural production (particularly livestock production) and extractive use, such as natural resource harvesting and self-provisioning and for sale (see Cross *et al.* 1996b: 188; Cocks & Wiersum 2003). I found that in general the livelihood strategies linked to natural resource use were, in themselves, rather marginal and at best supplementary livelihood strategies, albeit ones that served as a very valuable 'fall-back' position for the most vulnerable. The exception here was the use of grazing resources by the livestock that were owned by a range of households. As a natural resource-based livelihood strategy, livestock-keeping played a key part in the survivalist and accumulation strategies of a significant proportion of rural households, even for those households that did not actually own livestock (Shackleton *et al.* 2001).

Of course, the role of both agricultural production and opportunistic natural resource harvesting in allowing people to diversify their livelihoods differed from place to place and from household to household. In Peddie District, the natural resource endowment, for instance, was circumscribed by agro-ecological characteristics, such as soil quality, topography and rainfall, that increase the risk of failure in dryland

³ By *dominant* I mean a livelihood source that constituted more than 50% of a household's *cash* income. Conversely, I define as *significant diversification* a situation where the single biggest household income source contributed no more than one-third of overall household income, in cash terms (May 1996: 21-23). Although identifying *dominant* sources of livelihood, as measured in cash income, in this way can mask the extent and relative importance of non-monetary contributions to livelihoods within each household (a valid criticism of this approach to understanding livelihoods [see Shackleton *et al.* 2000, Cousins 1999]), it is nevertheless indicative of the ways in which people in rural Peddie District constructed their livelihoods (see Ellis 2000: 227).

⁴ In 2001, an old age pension was worth R540.00 per month. It increased to R570.00 per month towards the end of 2001.

farming (Steyn 1988). In only a few cases did these natural resource-based livelihoods constitute the mainstay of any particular household's livelihoods, and these strategies could not actually sustain more than a tiny number of households in rural Peddie District for any length of time. This is not to suggest, however, that the supplementary contribution of natural resource harvesting to livelihoods at the aggregate level was negligible, merely that it was highly variable (cf. Cocks & Wiersum 2003).

Importantly, livelihood diversification and overall resilience was also an artefact of past household investments or disinvestments, as evidenced by the widespread abandonment of field-level cultivation in the drier western and central areas of Peddie District. Furthermore, the possibility of diversification into the so-called 'formal economy' was severely limited for people who were unemployed and languished in Peddie District with poor education and skills levels, i.e. because of a lack of prior investment in education.

'Straddling' town and countryside

In the period prior to 1994, the fact that rural Peddie District had a poorly developed economy meant that much of the work of livelihoods took place outside the rural sector, with rural people overwhelmingly dependent on the jobs, resources, people (both kin and other social networks) and information to be found in urban centres (see Chapter One). These are the rural-urban linkages that were key to people's livelihoods in Peddie District. As I have indicated, these linkages have long been underpinned more by circular migration and commuter migration than by the classic pattern of long-term labour migration to distant centres of employment.

With few exceptions – cattle production being the most obvious one – the village economy in Peddie District was characterised more by consumption and social reproduction than agricultural production for the market, and this had been increasingly the case since at least the 1950s (cf. Maree & De Vos 1975; De Wet 1997: 7-8). Over time, many families responded to this dire economic situation by abandoning their rural homesteads and leaving the area permanently for cities and

towns, albeit against the tide of apartheid-era proscriptions which sought to confine black people to the overcrowded reserves.

The people who remained in the village came under pressure to seek out new opportunities, or to reinvigorate old ones, to make rural life more economically attractive, as well as socially appealing and culturally meaningful, both for themselves as village communities of residents and for those *umzi* members employed in town (see McAllister 1981,1985; Ngwane 2003).⁵ In short, I argue that, in the face of a weakening rural economy, maintaining and even increasing their 'entitlements' to resources generated through the livelihoods of town-based *umzi* members and to the resources made available by urban-based state institutions became the real and very necessary work of the people in rural *imizi*.⁶

However, in their endeavours to encourage investments in their rural *imizi* by their urban-based employed kin, the people who were committed to a rural existence had a limited repertoire of real economic investment options (as opposed to more obviously social, ritual, cultural or moral ones). This was partly because people in the reserves did not have title to their residential and arable land. I argue that, given the present configuration of modified 'communal' rangeland management regimes and far more *laissez faire* (some would say ineffectual) post-apartheid state intervention in agriculture, cattle-ownership (and to a lesser extent, goat-ownership) was one attractive investment option that was accessible to most *imizi* in rural Peddie District (see Cross *et al.* 1996a: 139; Scoones & Wolmer 2003: 2).

The repeal of 'influx control' legislation in 1986 meant that black South Africans were no longer prevented from settling in (racially segregated) urban areas.⁷ Bank

⁵ I do not wish to suggest here that rural people connived to deliberately plot out a 'marketing strategy' for their village, but my observation was that at the *umzi* level and radiating outwards into the village, rural people were consistently and collectively mindful of keeping their kin, who were away in towns, materially and socially involved in their rural homes (see Crain [1998] and Bank [2002a] for similar arguments).

⁶ In the past, a significant way of securing urban-to-rural transfers of resources was through demanding bridewealth from male migrants or urban-based men. I argue that rituals had largely taken on this role (see Chapter Eight).

⁷ Note, however, that the huge 'satellite' settlement of Mdantsane, as well as places of employment such as Zwelitsha and Dimbaza, were situated within the Ciskei and thus their residents were not subject to 'influx control' regulations, but did experience other restrictions on their mobility beyond the borders of the Ciskei (De Wet & Holbrook 1997).

(1997b: 20) suggests that most of the rapid expansion of informal settlements around every town and city in the Eastern Cape consisted of people moving in directly from the villages of the then bantustans (see also De Wet & Holbrook 1997). Most of this influx of people took place from the late 1980s through to 1995. The movement of especially young people out of rural villages had an equivocal effect on rural homesteads.⁸ On the one hand, it went some way to relieving the pressure of having to provide for these younger, often more demanding *umzi* members. On the other hand, securing both regular remittances and future investments in the rural *umzi* by those employed in regional towns proved more difficult (Moodie 1994; Manona *et al.* 1996).

Given that the urban job market continued to shrink through the 1990s, relatively few of these young people, who virtually all lacked a network of contacts and the 'experience of urban job searches', were successful in setting themselves up on the urban periphery (Cross 2001). As a result, they somewhat reluctantly began to straddle the town and the rural village to survive. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that urban-based employed people were all too aware, even in the post-1994 period, that an urban-centred lifestyle involved increased exposure to economic, social, ritual and even physical risks. To offset the risks of urban life, many town-based people chose to actively maintain ties with their rural homes (Ainslie 1998: 185-6). The perception of greater rural social stability and a wider social support network in rural villages has long been important for the category of single mothers working in towns or cities who relied on their parents back in the village to care for their school-going children. Moreover, certain socio-economic categories of urban-based workers, especially those in unskilled jobs, were particularly vulnerable to retrenchments, evictions and other negative aspects of urban life, such as the relatively higher cost of living and higher incidence of crime and violence. These factors contributed towards making 'straddling' an attractive option for many of the people employed or simply resident in town.

The conspicuous investment in housing by town-based people in their rural 'home' villages must be taken as evidence of their maintenance of the option of rural

⁸ Any man under the age of 34-35 years was regarded as a youth who, even though he has been initiated into manhood, cannot 'stand for himself' [hold his own] in the company of senior men.

residence as a risk-spreading strategy, including the possibility of rural retirement after a career spent living in the city (Manona 1999: 33). Where villages boasted basic services, including good vehicular access roads, electricity and water, and educational facilities, they enjoyed renewed regard among some town-based people as attractive, long-term prospects for material investment and eventual residence, especially where they were within easy reach of the city (Ainslie 1998: 197ff; Beinart 1998; James 2000: 153-4).

The rise of the social welfare economy

For many households, much (but not all – see below) of the work of securing their *dominant* livelihoods more than ever took place in spaces other than in the rural village itself (Fraser *et al.* 2003).⁹ For instance, securing an old-age pension made people beholden to the government officials in Peddie town and in the provincial capital of Bisho, and not to anyone in the village. During the period 1994-1997, for instance, the chronic unreliability of the disbursement system of social welfare grants kept rural people's attention firmly focussed on the local media for assurances that they would indeed receive their bi-monthly (later monthly) grants. Not only pensions and grants but also the salaries of those fortunate enough to be employed in the district in the government service came from Pretoria or Bisho. Where remittances were still important to the rural *umzi*, the work of ensuring that remittances were sent regularly to the rural home from a town-based husband or wife, son or daughter kept many rural people focused squarely on political and economic events in the cities and on the specific circumstances experienced by their town-based kin.¹⁰

SAIRR (1999: 461) indicates that provincial expenditure on social welfare disbursement in the Eastern Cape jumped by 25,5% in 1996/97, as large areas of the former bantustans, and the qualifying recipients of welfare grants, were rapidly brought under the state's social welfare umbrella. However, in the period 1996-1998,

⁹ Twenty years ago, De Wet and McAllister (1983: 70), noted for the neighbouring Keiskammahoek district that '...[a]t present agriculture is at best a secondary source of subsistence to families whose major sources of income come from outside the local community, either in the form of remittances or of pensions...[a]nd much of their lives within it are geared to time-consuming activities such as domestic chores ...or to education as a means of getting out of the community.'

¹⁰ Manona *et al.* (1996: 74), in their 1993 sample of 50 households in Peddie Extension, found that 84% of the household members who resided outside Peddie District, were in various urban centres in the Eastern Cape and the remaining 16% were in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

several reviews of the social welfare system, which were initiated by the provincial government to rid the system of ‘ghost’ recipients, also withdrew pension and disability grant benefits from several thousand legitimate claimants across the Eastern Cape Province. Some of these desperately needed grants were suspended for up to two years, causing people to rue their increasing dependence on pensions.

By early 1999, though, monthly disbursements had become more reliable and less a cause for distress than they were in the fairly chaotic initial post-1994 period. As a result, pensions and disability grants (as well as child support grants and HIV/Aids sufferers’ support grants, which were more recent innovations) became central to rural people’s livelihoods, to the extent that by 2001 they were regarded as entitlements that qualifying rural people command in the rural sector (Sagner 2000; Van der Berg 1997; Aliber 2003).

Although far more could be done, the economies of rural villages across the district have benefited from pension and disability grant disbursements, with many small businesses specifically geared to capturing as much as possible of the social welfare cash that was disbursed regularly into the local economy. At times these attempts took place with government assistance, as in community projects aimed at commercial pig or poultry production that tried to synchronise their produce sales with social welfare pay-outs. Of course, a high percentage of this regular supply of cash into rural villages leaked out, back into the towns and cities, as most people preferred to buy food and other necessities more cheaply in bulk from town-based wholesalers.

What were the key impacts of the post-1994 roll-out of social welfare disbursements on household livelihoods? Firstly, the roll-out had the effect of further concentrating (and thus politicising) the *dominant* livelihood sources of the greater majority of households in rural Peddie District. Secondly, it entrenched the fact that the bulk of household livelihoods were derived from sources other than the productive use of natural resources, specifically field agriculture. Thirdly, the rise of social welfare disbursements also contributed to more people returning to the village where they were only partially supported by pensions and grants, while many of them contributed to increased levels of extractive harvesting of certain natural resources, such as

firewood and wild foods (see Kepe 2002a: 98; Shackleton *et al.* 1999). Fourthly and rather critically, social welfare grants placed a significant new emphasis on the social and economic role of the elderly and especially of elderly women. As many as 70% of the old-age pensioners in rural South Africa were women (SAIRR 1999: 240). This was partly because women qualify for pensions at the age of 60 years, five years earlier than men, and because women lived longer than men on average (Møller & Ferreira 2003).

The new significance of the welfare economy as a proportion of the livelihoods of most rural households proved to be both a blessing and a curse. In many of the households that benefited from social welfare disbursements, a realignment of the politics of household consumption took place at the same time as a redistribution of *umzi* members in space, often in favour of (cheaper) rural residence. Increasingly, in those cases where town-based employed adults had left their school-going children in the care of their elderly village-based parents, the parents complained that there was a drop in the regularity and amounts transferred as remittances from town. The reason was that those in town took the new-found pensions-derived spending power of their elderly parents to be sufficient to maintain the rural homestead (cf. Breslin *et al.* 1997; Hajdu 2003: 25). Also, unemployed town-based *umzi* members took to returning to the village more readily and, once there, to making demands on the pensions and grants of their parents and kin, in ways that exacerbated existing gender and generational tensions.

With the unemployment rate in the Eastern Cape estimated to be 48,5% in 1996, the livelihoods of the majority of rural households were under considerable strain.¹¹ In effect, the households that came to rely on state transfers to elderly or disabled members as their *dominant* (sometimes only) source of livelihood also saw their livelihood vulnerability increase (Van der Berg 1997: 499). From a development perspective, it thus became clear that pensions and grants were insufficient to lift most of the households that were rurally based out of what was in effect chronic structural poverty. In the absence of other employment opportunities, one unfortunate

¹¹ This is using the so-called 'expanded' official definition of the unemployed as those who have not worked during the seven days prior to the interview, and were available to start work within a week of the interview (SAIRR 1999: 299-300).

effect of an increased reliance on pensions was an exacerbation of rural poverty, i.e. the relegation of many unemployed, impoverished, disabled and sickly people to the rural periphery, where the opportunities for upward mobility remained severely constrained.

‘Jobbing’ as a component of ‘rural’ livelihoods

‘Jobbing’ was important for all rurally resident men and women in the economically active category. ‘Jobbing’ was a widely used local term which encompasses any work of a temporary, usually poorly paid, nature. When asked whether an absent household member was employed in town, people often responded, *‘Hayi, akaphangeli, uyajobba nje’* [No, s/he is not employed, s/he is just ‘jobbing’]. For most people, ‘jobbing’ was distinct from what they would regard as real work, i.e. waged or salaried employment of longer and preferably permanent duration, in any sector of the ‘formal’ economy, whether in town or in the village. The main difference between ‘jobbing’ and working was the level of job insecurity, but the level of remuneration was also a consideration.

It is worth noting that the widespread casualisation of work in the rural former Ciskei reserves was not a recent phenomenon, but in fact had a long history. In Peddie District, public works programmes and poverty relief projects that casually employed people were instituted virtually from the establishment of the first Mfengu settlement in 1835, and have continued right through to the present time. By the end of the 1970s, as the decline in job opportunities in the formal economy began to take its toll on people’s livelihoods, casual work surfaced as an especially important survivalist livelihood strategy (Switzer 1993: 329).¹² In the period 1980-1994, ‘jobbing’ in Peddie District included short-term contracts and piece-work on a wide range of projects initiated by government departments of the Ciskeian bantustan (Ainslie 1998: 118). Some of these projects fell under the Ciskei Employment Action Programme (CEAP), a ‘poverty relief’ intervention, with party political strings attached. De Wet and McAllister (1983: 19) reported on the politicised nature of these jobs in Chatha, Keiskammahoek District, where each sub-headman would

¹² SAIRR (1999: 405) notes an increase in annual real personal disposable income per capita in South Africa (for all ‘races’) in the period 1961 to 1980, except for decreases in the years 1973, 1976 and 1978. This index of personal income (the proportion of total personal income per capita minus direct taxes) peaked in 1980 at R9,690. Subsequently, in the years 1980-1998, it showed a decrease in ten of the 18 years, including during the five-year period, 1990-1994.

identify the neediest people in his village-section and then forward this list to the location headman, who would decide on the final list of successful applicants. Residents who were openly opposed to the Ciskei bantustan were least likely to secure employment on these poverty relief schemes (Manona 1980a). The CEAP employed people on a casual basis to bring about often-superficial improvements in their local environment. Several people I interviewed in Hamburg recalled that during the early-to-mid 1980s, the only employment that they could secure was undignified work as litter-collectors around the village for a paltry daily wage, amounting to between R60.00 and R66.00 per month at the time.

In 1985, there were more than 4,000 people in 90 administrative areas around the Ciskei who were employed on projects to combat soil erosion (De Beer 1986: 193). When I started my first fieldwork research in Peddie District in 1994, I encountered numerous adult men and women, ranging in age from 30 to the late 40s, who had never been formally employed. Instead, they had 'jobbed' intermittently on short-term projects and, for the rest, relied on their parents' pensions and wider social networks.

Various post-1994 government departments and parastatal organisations continued with the 'jobbing' approach in the villages of Peddie District. During my fieldwork and shortly before, Telkom, the telecommunications parastatal, employed mostly young men from Hamburg village on short-term contracts to repair the telephone lines along the main coastal road. A few men from Hamburg also benefited through contract employment from Eskom, the electricity supply and management parastatal, when vast areas of the former banstustans were electrified, with a few men fortunate to have their contracts extended for up to two years. At Loverstwit, jobs were made available, again mostly to men, during the reconstruction and upgrading of the R72 coastal road. Although ten young men were intermittently employed as road construction workers, four other local men were taken on as security guards at the construction compound. Other projects involved the construction of infrastructure, including bulk water schemes, dip tanks and the perennial favourite, fencing.

In Hamburg in 2001, I witnessed a fairly typical example of a supposedly labour-intensive project, this time an intra-village road maintenance initiative. This project

was awarded on public tender to a private contractor who was required to negotiate the precise terms of the labour-intensive component with local community representatives. These negotiations resulted in the job creation component of the project that set out to provide employment for 121 men and women over a four-month period. The 121 people were divided into four groups of 29 workers, with five other people forming a core 'supervisory' team.

The members of the four groups of men and women working together were each supposed to work for a total period of 20 days, and to get paid a daily wage of R43.00. Had this programme been followed, each person would have made R860.00. As it happened, however, several people decided to share their allotted work days with kin or friends, for a variety of reasons. These reasons included recognition of the serious need of other people, which was in line with the *masincedisane* [let us help each other] norm of good neighbourliness (see McAllister 1992: 204; Hammond-Tooke 1974c: 361-2).¹³ In other instances, it occurred simply because the appointed worker was unable to work on a particular day or period and 'gave' the day to another person, sometimes another member of their household. Some senior men could not contemplate working in a group with younger men and women and instructed a younger member of their household to do the work instead.

In the end, wages paid to the people employed on the project amounted to a mere R220,000, while the entire project had a budget of over R4 million. For a supposedly labour-intensive initiative to rehabilitate about eight kilometres of gravel roads, the project appeared to rely to an inordinate extent on hired mechanical plant to effect what appeared to be a relatively simple road-maintenance exercise. A few months later, heavy rains had rendered the 'upgraded' roads more impassable than before the project had commenced. Moreover, virtually everyone in the village was disgruntled about the project. Local people were convinced that they had been robbed by the contractor. People felt that he, aided by the venal officials in the municipality who had awarded the contract, had pocketed the bulk of the project funds.

¹³ This is the 'economy of obligation' to which Sansom (1981: 104) refers. (see Moodie with Ndatshie [1994: 38] for parallels with their explanation of *ubudoda* among Mpondo migrants). *Masincedisane* was not necessarily linked to the dominant patriarchal value-system. It also served as the idiom for a range of social practices that involved women who were apparently increasingly operating outside the patriarchal model.

A more recent government innovation was to insist that explicit quotas of women, the disabled and the youth were employed on projects funded by the state. This created new tensions at village level, particularly around what constitutes men's work and women's work. In late November 2001, for instance, three women and one man in Loverstwiist were employed for eight weeks to do the physically demanding labour of digging perhaps 1,5 kilometres of shallow trenches. They were to be followed later by a mechanical shovel, which would deepen the trench to accommodate the piping that would finally deliver water to the village. Several men and women took exception to the fact that women rather than men should get this work. They were also upset that the three women were members of the village Water Committee, raising questions about the procedures involved in allocating these jobs.

For Hamburg and adjacent coastal villages, the year 2000 ushered in a highly lucrative innovation in the local 'jobbing' repertoire. This was controlled harvesting of abalone from the sea. Abalone is a sought-after shellfish that commands a high price in the export market. Some forty people, mostly women in this instance, were each granted a seasonal license to wade into the sea and, with the assistance of a contracted diver, to extract a daily quota of abalone. This licensed harvesting was soon dwarfed, however, by the extent of the parallel illegal extraction (by other men and women) of this high-value resource. Although lucrative, this activity was still considered by local people as 'jobbing', because it did not guarantee a monthly income (legal diving only took place in fair weather) and because people knew that it would only be of short duration.¹⁴

On the face of it, the challenge of stimulating local economic development was neatly addressed by offering work to underemployed rural people on much-needed local infrastructural delivery projects. However, there were a number of problems with the 'jobbing' approach, specifically in relation to people's longer-term livelihoods. Firstly, these projects did little to enhance rural people's skills, with participants generally only providing unskilled manual labour. Also, the short project cycle of the 'culture of jobbing' had a pervasive negative impact on the rural economy of the district. This was because sporadically provided casual or contract work seriously limited the longer-term

¹⁴ At the height of the abalone harvesting, some young men were claiming to earn R1,500 a week from this activity, a considerable sum of money that was equivalent to the price of one heifer.

accumulation strategies of rural households, simply because the people so employed were not able to plan further than a few months ahead. This was demonstrated in the case of 31-year old Themba Natazo, even though he was fortunate to be employed by Telkom on an unusually long two-year 'jobbing' contract in June 1997.

The case of Themba Natazo, contractor worker

Themba completed his schooling in 1993 in Hamburg. He went to East London to seek employment, but could only find jobs with building contractors, as a 'casual', i.e. day-labourer. Unsuccessful in securing longer-term work, he returned to Hamburg by 1996. In June 1997, he secured a two-year long contract with Telkom. This was fortuitous because his widowed mother had not yet reached the pensionable age of 60 years and no-one else in the Natazo household was employed at the time. Instead, they were making ends meet by rearing pigs, which they slaughtered and sold in the village. His mother also sold vegetables from her garden.

With his wages from Telkom, Themba bought three piglets for his mother. Then he wanted to have the *umgidi* [feast] that the family had been unable to afford when he had been initiated into manhood. After three months of work he paid Khayaletu Mapayi, the owner of the biggest herd in the village, R1,200 for an ox. He also bought *imithombo* [the prepacked ingredients for brewing 'traditional' sorghum beer] and a case [i.e. 12 bottles] of brandy. His mother and the husband of his elder sister helped him to buy groceries for the feast.

Once the *umgidi* was over Themba felt free to spend his wages on whatever else he needed. He bought cement to repair and plaster his flat. He also bought a bedroom suite and a colour television. He bought clothes for himself and his girlfriend. His main problem, he volunteered, was that he went on to spend too much of his wages on alcohol, increasing his 'credits' [i.e. debts] at several local *shebeens*. He did, however, spend R400 every month during his period of employment on food for his home, because, as he put it, 'my mother and my sisters are very strict [about this].'

Having conducted an *umgidi* [feast] to ritually thank his ancestors and to inform the community at large that he was now a man, Themba might be expected to turn his

thoughts to longer-term goals, like marriage and setting up his own homestead. However, the short-term and uncertain nature of 'jobbing' means that he might have a long wait before being presented with another opportunity to earn some money. With no post-secondary qualifications and no immediate prospect of securing any, it was clear that by the time Themba was employed again he would have incurred debts around the village. He would also be morally and materially indebted to his mother so that any wage he earned may have to be spent on repaying his debts and contributing to the homestead. Unlike other young men employed by Telkom, Themba did not invest any of his wages in some form of savings, such as by buying a few cattle. With the job over, his dependence on the material support and goodwill of his (now) pensioned mother and unemployed siblings did not bode well for his longer-term economic upward mobility.

Without resorting to blaming the poor for their predicament, I want to suggest that 'jobbing' stifled other more entrepreneurial forms of economic activity in rural villages. This was because the villages were usually awash with rumours that the contractor who would implement a long-awaited infrastructural project and thus bring jobs to the village had just been sighted in the area and was about to introduce this project. The likelihood of the imminent arrival of yet another project was often reinforced by local politicians, who quite understandably worked hard to secure sought-after services and infrastructural improvements, and the opportunities for work that these initiatives entail, for their constituents.

Moreover, 'jobbing' had considerable social costs. In the past, as pointed out above, this had to do with the political dimension of the allocation of jobs. With the demise of this political order, the jockeying for inclusion became less of a (perhaps simpler) 'us-and-them' situation, but serious contestation increased on the part of the people who were structurally unemployed and on the basis of gender (especially with women vying for jobs in what many men regarded as customarily male domains of work). Every new project was ushered in by an inevitable sequence of well-attended public meetings. I attended several of these community meetings which involved the communal scrutiny and weighing up of the livelihoods and the perceived relative neediness of individuals and the households to which they belonged or claimed to belong. Not surprisingly, the tension was often palpable, with direct and veiled

comments about specific people's eligibility or otherwise to secure work. A 28-year-old young man recounted to me his version of how fraught the process of selecting people to work on projects in Hamburg actually was.

Ms. X [who is about 20 years old, from a relatively well-to-do family in Hamburg, and whose mother is influential in community matters] had her name placed high enough on the list to ensure that she would secure work on the roads project. Her mother told the meeting that her daughter was an unemployed school-leaver and could not be expected to live at home [supported by her parents] forever.

Mrs. N is a community leader who, instead of making sure that the most deserving people are catered for, is herself among those who will be working on the project. She cannot be trusted at all. She might even alter the list by putting her friends on it once the meeting is over.

The way this community employment list works is not right. In the past, when I wanted my name included on the list, I was blocked because some people said that both my parents were pensioners and that we weren't struggling enough. So, at yesterday's meeting, I tried to tell people that since my father's death there is only my mother's pension in our home, and that this [degree of poverty] entitles me, a man who is unemployed and who does not drink [alcohol], to get work on this project. When I [finally] got the opportunity to see where my name had been placed on the list, it turned out that I was placed at #83 on a list of 84 names. People are going about these things in very wrong ways, even those people one can usually trust seem unable to reason properly when it comes to the projects list (Zolile Mthi, Hamburg village).

In the absence of more reliable longer-term employment, 'jobbing' provided a valuable income, some of which was channelled into the household as a whole. Indeed, the very public dissection of different people's perceived relative deprivation hinged on an analysis of the livelihoods – and the relative contributions and indeed the personal character and habits – of both male and female members of each household that had members vying for a place on the list. This resulted in considerable social pressure being exerted on the recipients of 'jobs' to use their

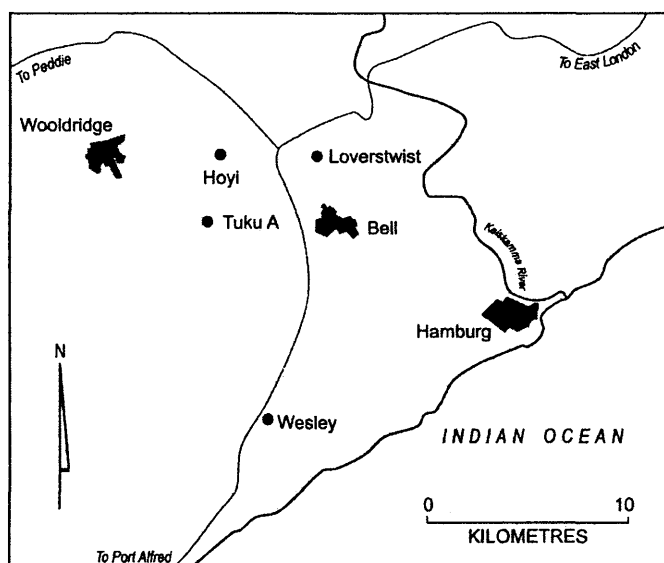
wages to 'build their homes' and not to squander their earnings, especially as they may have a desperately long wait, given the numbers of unemployed local (and town-based)¹⁵ people, before a 'jobbing' opportunity came their way again.

In the analysis of livelihoods in Loverstwest and Hamburg, I draw on the data that I collected by means of a household questionnaire survey that was administered to a random sample of 90 households in the two villages during Sep-Oct 2001.

Constructing livelihoods in Loverstwest and Hamburg, ca. 2001

The demise of regular long-distance labour migration for most of the economically active men in these villages has added to the complexity and variety of 'rural' livelihoods. Whereas at the height of labour migration to the mines and urban industries the household developmental cycle was a powerful tool in understanding typical changes in the development of rural households over time (cf. Murray 1987), things have shifted somewhat. Livelihoods have become more varied and less secure and factors such as educational opportunities, skills levels and spatial accessibility have arguably increased in importance in the analysis of households and livelihoods.

Map 3: Location of Study Sites



¹⁵ I encountered several examples of unemployed town-based people who, acting on the advice of their family members in the village, returned to the village specifically in an attempt to secure employment on the various 'jobbing' projects.

Although only some 17 kilometres (by road) apart, Loverstwist and Hamburg were surprisingly dissimilar in some of their more general socio-economic features. Loverstwist was established in the mid-1980s on what was previously freehold farmland. As pointed out in Chapter Three, the residents of Loverstwist were mostly drawn from neighbouring farms, on which the older and middle generations had spent their lives employed as unskilled or at best semi-skilled farmworkers, and later, under the Ciskei's agricultural development parastatal body, CAC, as pineapple estate workers and tractor and lorry drivers. Many of the families in the village shared ties of kinship and clanship and some had previously lived together on the same or adjacent farms for several generations.

The farm of Loverstwist had minimal grazing land for livestock and even less land that was suitable for arable production. The fact that the farm was claimed by the neighbouring village of Tuku A made some people reluctant to demarcate, clear and utilise ostensibly disputed arable land. Given the size of the farm, opportunities for natural resource harvesting were limited, and this undermined the attempts of poorer households to supplement their livelihoods. The current younger generation of residents, i.e. that group of youth born since 1990, was the first to enjoy full access to secondary education, and they attended the school some three kilometres away in neighbouring Tuku A village. At the risk of over-simplifying the local situation, Loverstwist was relatively undifferentiated, both economically and educationally, and differences in wealth across households were not (yet) significant.

By contrast, Hamburg was a much older settlement, dating to the 1850s. Hamburg's municipal status meant that it had long had a sizeable municipal commonage, for the exclusive use by the livestock of local rate-paying residents, who also paid grazing fees for this service. About 80 of the 245 Xhosa-speaking households in Hamburg had security of tenure (if not actual freehold title) to four-acre (1,89 hectares) plots of land in the village, which were much larger than the typical residential site in Loverstwist, and were used for residential and arable purposes.¹⁶ The balance of households in Hamburg had smaller sites or simply squatted on municipal land.

¹⁶ Some of these plots were granted from 1958 when some black residents were forced to move from prime land close to the sea.

Loverstwit had five civil servants (all teachers) resident or employed in the village. Despite its modest size, there were more than 30 civil servants who worked in Hamburg village.¹⁷ This very high number of civil servants, relative to other villages, was partly because Lennox Sebe, the leader of the Ciskei bantustan government between 1973 and 1989, ensured that the administration and facilities of the village were maintained and further developed.

Economically, Hamburg was far more internally differentiated than Loverstwit. Many of the longer-established families had managed to accumulate far more in the way of assets, such as cattle and farming equipment, than the poorer families in the same village. The longer-established families also lived in bigger, more elaborately constructed homes. Many of them had ensured that their children were well-educated and in steady urban-based employment. But this gave rise to out-migration by the economically active in search of employment, which resulted in many well-to-do households in Hamburg exhibiting the 'missing middle generation' syndrome, with many of the older generation distinctly reliant on the social welfare economy.¹⁸

The economic opportunities on offer in Hamburg, limited as they were, had also encouraged the in-migration of people uprooted from other villages and farms, over the past 30-40 years. These mostly less well-educated people were more often unemployed and constituted the distinctly poorer section of the village community. It was notable, however, that the households of these poorer families were dotted around the village and did not form discrete neighbourhoods. These people did not own the land on which they lived, their houses were far more modest, and for the most part, their livelihoods were altogether less secure. However, many of the poorer families sought to demonstrate ties of kinship and clanship to better-off households in the village. In effect, Hamburg was a village of significant contrasts in economic fortunes between households, but one in which the livelihoods of the poor remained closely tied to the fortunes of the better-off households, through ties of kinship and moral obligation.

¹⁷ As teachers, policemen (18 in total), administrative clerks and labourers at the municipality, nature conservators, municipal councillors, cashiers, nurses, cleaners and a dipping foreman. Other people in Hamburg worked as domestic workers and gardeners for white holiday home-owners in the village.

¹⁸ The difference in resident household sizes between the villages was notable. The Loverstwit sample had an average household size of 5,2 members, while the sample of households in Hamburg had only 3,6 resident members on average.

A further structural difference between Loverstwist and Hamburg was the issue of accessibility. Loverstwist was situated directly adjacent to the R72 coastal route. This road connected the two industrial port cities of Port Elizabeth and East London, which were some 270 kilometres apart and which together formed the backbone of the Eastern Cape economy. This proximity to the R72 and especially to East London made the people of Loverstwist extraordinarily mobile. By contrast, the people of Hamburg had to contend with being the last stop at the end of an additional 14 kilometres of gravel road that was sometimes in indifferent condition. For the majority of poor people who relied on transport by mini-bus taxi, this apparently small detail constituted a costly impediment to their mobility and negatively affected their livelihoods.

In the section that follows, I try to explain some of the differences and similarities of how a sample of households constructed their livelihoods and households in Loverstwist and Hamburg.

Table 4.1. 'Dominant' livelihoods in Loverstwist (n=30) and Hamburg (n=60), measured by source of cash income.

	LOVERSTWIST		HAMBURG	
SOURCE OF INCOME	No. OF H/HOLDS	%	No. OF H/HOLDS	%
Pensions/Grants	12 (9,5)	40	24 (6,0)	40
Remittances	8 (6,25)	30	Nil	---
Local Formal Employment	Nil	---	6 (4,3)	10
Local informal/'Jobbing'	7 (6,6)	20	28 (9,4)	47
Savings	1 (8)	3	2 (4,5)	3
Hand-Outs ¹⁹	2 (5,3)	7	Nil	---
TOTAL	30	100	60	100

While I am mindful of the fact that concentrating on *dominant* livelihood strategies does not provide a complete picture of all contributions to household livelihoods, it is nevertheless useful in highlighting several differences and similarities between the two villages, as indicated in Table 4.1. The table shows that entitlements to social welfare pensions and grants occupied first place in terms of the *dominant* livelihood in households in Loverstwist, with 40% of the households in that sample listing

¹⁹ Handouts include material support in cash or (more commonly) in kind given to destitute people and households by kin and neighbours on the basis of the *masincedisane* norm.

pensions/grants as their *dominant* income source. In Hamburg, 40% of the sampled households also listed pensions/grants as their dominant income source, but this was eclipsed by the 47% of households that listed informal employment/'jobbing' as their *dominant* income source.²⁰

What is telling about the total (i.e. resident and absent) household size (noted in brackets in Table 4.1.) is that in Loverstwist, the category with the highest average household size (9,5 members) was the category in which people listed pensions/grants as their *dominant* income source. In Hamburg the largest category (i.e. that had informal employment/ 'jobbing' as its *dominant* income source) also had the largest households, with 9,4 members on average. However, only 17% of the households in the Loverstwist sample and a mere 5% of those in the Hamburg sample had eight or more household members who were usually resident in the village. In the current economic situation, large households with high dependency ratios were not an optimum livelihood adaptation strategy. Instead, these large households were likely to be among the poorer households in the respective villages.²¹

In Hamburg, remittances did not constitute the *dominant* source of income for any of the households in the sample although there were households in the village that depended on remittances for their livelihood. In contrast, 30% of the households in the sample in Loverstwist listed remittances as their *dominant* source of income. This had to do both with the greater mobility of Loverstwist people who were employed in town and with the fact that many of them were, for economic and cultural reasons, still attached to their natal homesteads in the village.

Many of the 'missing middle generation' of people in Hamburg were resident in town, where probably the majority were employed. They had set up their homes in town and either elected not, or were not in a position, to remit regularly to the village. The absence of remittances as a *dominant* livelihood in Hamburg was also a reflection of the much greater access in Hamburg to local wage-earning and

²⁰ Note that by my definition of *significant* diversification (see above), neither the Loverstwist nor Hamburg sample of households exhibited livelihoods that are *significantly* diversified.

²¹ To a point, a numerically bigger household does, however, allow for greater 'economies of scale' with respect to consumption, since it is generally cheaper to buy and prepare food in bulk than it is to duplicate these activities across several smaller, discrete households (see Baber 1996; Waller 1999: 25).

‘jobbing’, as well as greater opportunities for local salaried employment in Hamburg than were available to the residents of Loverstwist.

It is clear that the greater number of salary-based incomes in Hamburg had the effect of increasing the opportunities and proportion of incomes that might be derived from ‘jobbing’. This was because the comparatively much higher number of people in local employment in Hamburg spent a fair proportion of their income locally, even in the cases where they were commuter migrants in the village, i.e. not members of Hamburg households. Some, even most, of this money then circulated in the local Hamburg economy, through support for local businesses. The local grocery store, owned and run by a local woman (who employed four or five local people) and the *shebeens* in the village benefit from this support.²² Opportunities for part-time and temporary jobs for local people provided by wealthier households were also more common.

A proportion of the money paid as salaries to employed people in Hamburg was thus spent on the day-to-day consumption-centred livelihoods of households in Hamburg, such as buying food and paraffin. A smaller proportion was invested in the savings and accumulation projects of Hamburg households. The rest of the money that was paid as salaries leaked out through the remittances which those in the ‘non-resident employed persons’ category repatriated to their homes elsewhere.

The overall effect, however, was one in which local economic activity was stimulated and opportunities created for a greater proportion of resident people to opportunistically piece together their livelihoods in the village than was the case in Loverstwist, where significantly less money entered the village by way of salaries and wages (i.e. earned by household members who were resident in the village). There were consequently fewer businesses in Loverstwist attempting to capture all incoming money and much of this money simply passed through the village, to be spent again on purchases in town. This was illustrated by the fact that, as shown in Table 4.2, 28% of the sample of households in Hamburg were reliant on the ‘informal sector’ only, while the proportion in Loverstwist was 7% of the sampled households. Also, 53% of the Hamburg sample of households included what I have called

²² One young woman who owned a *shebeen* informed me that her business usually cleared R700.00 a month, which was much the same as the three other *shebeens* in the vicinity.

‘informal-sector’ activities in their overall repertoire of livelihoods, while only 33% of the Loverstwist sample did the same.

Table 4.2. Cash-based livelihood sources in Loverstwist and Hamburg.

No. OF LIVELIHOOD SOURCES	LOVERSTWIST		HAMBURG	
	No. H/HOLDS	%	No. H/HOLDS	%
One source of Livelihood	(7,5 people) ²³		(4,42 people)	
Pension Or Grant <i>Only</i>	4	13	10	17
Informal Sector <i>Only</i>	2	7	17	28
Local Salaried Employment <i>Only</i>	Nil	---	3	5
Remittances <i>Only</i>	5	20	Nil	---
Handouts <i>Only</i>	1	3	Nil	---
Savings or ‘Package’ ²⁴ <i>Only</i>	1	3	2	3
Two sources of Livelihood	(7,15 people)		(6,87 people)	
Pension and Remittances	3	10	7	12
Pension and Salary	Nil	---	3	5
Pension and Informal Sector	2	7	5	8
Salary and Remittances	Nil	---	Nil	---
Salary and Informal Sector	Nil	---	3	5
Remittances and Inf. Sector	2	7	3	5
Remits and Handouts	4	13	Nil	---
Inf. Sector and Handouts	1	3	3	5
Pension and Handouts	1	3	Nil	---
‘Package’ and Inf. Sector	1	3	Nil	---
Three sources of Livelihood	(10 people)		(5,5 people)	
Pension, Remits and Inf. Sector	1	3	2	3
Remits, Inf. Sector and Handouts	Nil	---	1	2
Salary, Inf. Sector and Handouts	1	3	Nil	---
Pension, Remits and Handouts	1	3	Nil	---
‘Package’, Inf.Sector and Remits	Nil	---	1	2
TOTAL	30	~100	60	~100

Rather than providing evidence for Bryceson’s notion of increased livelihood diversification in the (unplugged) ‘informal sector’ as a result of growing *unemployment* in the formal sector of the economy (see Bryceson 2002), it appears that the greater diversification of livelihoods in Hamburg, at least relative to Loverstwist, was underwritten by the greater number of salaries that were earned in formal employment locally and then diffused into the local village economy in Hamburg. This was indicative, I suggest, of the extent to which the majority of rural people in fact remained connected to the mainstream *cash* economy and cannot be said to be engaged in a diversified ‘second economy’.

²³ This was the mean total household size for the households in this category, i.e. including both resident and absent household members.

²⁴ A ‘package’ refers to the retrenchment payment in cash that may have accrued to an employee when he or she was retrenched.

Table 4.2 summarises the range of combinations of livelihoods that were found in the sampled households. This picture challenges the ‘emerging consensus’ of considerable livelihood diversification at the household level, at least for this sample of households in rural Peddie District. This is because a mere 9% of households in Loverstwit and 7% in Hamburg derived their cash-based livelihoods from three different sources of livelihood. In contrast, 46% of the households in Loverstwit and 53% in Hamburg made ends meet by relying on a solitary livelihood strategy. The balance of 46% in Loverstwit and 40% in Hamburg did so through a combination of only two livelihoods.²⁵

To illustrate this concentration of livelihoods, I have grouped a wider range of livelihoods into six main categories that are, for the most part, self-evident. Only two of these livelihood categories need to be spelled out more clearly. As pointed out above, ‘hand-outs’ includes support in cash or (more often) in kind from kin or neighbours and were distinguished from remittances or direct contributions from *bona fide* household members who were employed or ‘jobbing’. This ‘hand-outs’ category also includes three specific cases of support from boyfriends to young woman members of households in Loverstwit.²⁶

Given my assertions about the limited evidence supporting livelihood diversification, the potentially more contentious category is the one I have called the ‘informal sector’. My definition of an informal job refers specifically to employment and other livelihood activities that yield a cash income but for which no formal written contract of employment is entered into between the parties concerned. Here, a fairly wide range of marginal livelihoods was given by respondents and I list these in Appendix Three.

²⁵ I reiterate here that the the ‘informal-sector’ livelihoods in Table 4.2 do not include the livelihoods directed at *self-provisioning* use, firstly of the many natural resources, such as firewood, *kraal*wood, timber and mud for building, wild fruits and vegetables, game, medicinal plants, and secondly of agricultural resources, such as vegetable and grain crops, as well as livestock (draught, milk, meat, hides and manure). Instead, the livelihoods that I include under ‘informal sector’ are the ones such as ‘jobbing’ in which people were *paid* for piece-work, even where the piece-work in question may be to sell firewood (a natural resource) in the village.

²⁶ Survey respondents in Hamburg were understandably reticent about this sort of support, but several informants told me that ‘gifts from boyfriends’ (essentially in exchange for sex) constituted an important livelihood for several young women in Hamburg. This seemed likely given the fact that a number of employed men, including policemen, teachers and nature conservation officials earn (in relative terms) good salaries and spend time in the village fraternising with residents (cf. Liebenberg 1997; Scoones *et al.* 1996: 153, 184; Ferguson 2001[1990]: 127).

Table 4.2. gives an indication of the extent of livelihood specialisation in the two household samples. It is interesting to note from these data that 33% of the sampled households in Loverstwist and 53% of those in Hamburg included what I have called 'informal-sector' activities in their various livelihoods bundles. In Loverstwist, this reliance on informal-sector livelihoods was spread across the three livelihood categories, so that households that had 'informal-sector' livelihoods were included among those that had either one source, two sources or three sources of livelihood. In Hamburg, there was greater concentration of households that are reliant on the informal sector only, at 28 per cent of the households in the sample. A further 18 per cent listed informal-sector activities as part of a two-stream livelihood package and seven per cent listed these activities with two other livelihood activities. In terms of definitions, I would characterise this situation less as one of increasing livelihood diversification, and more as livelihood substitution and specialisation (see Ellis 2000: 215-6).

The impact of educational status on accumulation prospects for households in Loverstwist and Hamburg

Without discounting the many factors discussed above, it is not surprising that at least some of the differences in livelihoods between the villages and also within the two villages can be traced to differences in educational attainment. Here, the weakness of the household as unit of analysis is exposed, because education is, of course, attained by and measured on an individual-by-individual basis. However, there is a fairly predictable pattern that emerges from the data, which is that the households that have one or two adult members who had attained significant levels of education were also more likely to put an emphasis on educational attainment for their children and thus had a higher aggregate educational level than households in which no-one was well educated.

My argument is simply that, as the macro-economy has become more specialised and technology-driven, the ability of poorly-educated people to secure long-term employment has diminished. Squeezed out of the hi-tech urban economy, where the casualisation and devaluation of the low-skilled menial work for which they qualified were the norm, the poorly educated were thrown back onto the social welfare system and the meagre livelihood opportunities available in the rural areas. The two case-

studies presented below highlight some of the livelihood implications of educational differences.

Case-study of the Mkhaya household in Hamburg

Gcinikhaya Mkhaya was 47 years old. He had three years of schooling. His wife, MaTshezi, was 44 years old and had ten years of schooling. Both were formally unemployed, although Gcinikhaya had a casual job as a night watchman in Hamburg. They had four children aged 19 years (these are twins), 13 and 3. Gcinikhaya and his wife were also responsible for the care of their granddaughter, aged 4. Three of their four children were scholars. One of the twins was repeating standard ten, while the other was struggling to pass standard seven.

During 2000, Gcinikhaya's family was supported by 'hand-outs' from his father, an old-age pensioner and *ixhwele* [herbalist] of some renown, who also lived in Hamburg. Since acquiring a two-roomed government-subsidised 'RDP' house in the new 'Phola Park' section of Hamburg village, the family have moved out of the homestead of Gcinikhaya's father. However, Gcinikhaya and his son (13 years old at the time) still herded the five cattle of his elderly father. This was not unusual since Gcinikhaya, as his father's eldest son, had a close interest in the well-being of his father's cattle, which he stood to inherit one day. Moreover, by persisting with the herding of these cattle, Gcinikhaya continued to enjoy at least two meals a day at his father's homestead, and was able to prevail on his father occasionally for 'tobacco' money. Also, because of his own household's precarious financial position, Gcinikhaya's son continued to reside with his grandfather and Gcinikhaya's other children were frequent recipients of meals there.

For various reasons, MaTshezi was not on good terms with her affines. Instead, she was pleased to finally have her own domestic space. She made small amounts of money by gathering sea shells on the beach nearby with which she made decorative objects for sale. She also collected and sold oysters to tourists or fishermen in the village. The household had a radio, a freezer (which could not be used, as their house had no electricity) and some rudimentary items of furniture, but otherwise they had virtually no

possessions. Cooking was done by MaTshezi and her daughters on a paraffin cooker.

Gcinikhaya previously spent 19 years as a migrant worker, employed on a number of different gold mines on the Witwatersrand. During this time, he was a regular remitter to his wife in Hamburg village, something that his wife readily confirms, and he was able to accumulate a small herd of cattle. In fact, he had bought cattle with his wages since he was an *inkwenkwe* [boy]. When they married in 1980, he had paid the *lobolo* of eight cattle for his wife 'in cattle, not cash', he told me. For most of her married life, MaTshezi has lived with her in-laws.

In the prolonged drought of the early 1980s, six of his cattle died. Gcinikhaya subsequently bought one cow from the Mhlaza family in Hamburg. The cow calved several times, but most of its calves died, the last one in 1998. At present, only the cow and one of its calves survive. The family's only other livestock is two chickens. Gcinikhaya has no arable land of his own, but he (and latterly his son) assist with the ploughing and sowing of his father's lands.

When I interviewed them, they were about to sell the cow for R1,800 to a Hamburg family, which was closely related to MaTshezi, who were in need of an animal to slaughter for a funeral they would be hosting. It was MaTshezi who found the buyer for their remaining cow. She told me that they would use some of the money from the sale of this animal to buy fencing material and poles with which her husband would fence their small yard at their new home in Phola Park. This would allow them to start a small vegetable garden. They would also use some of the proceeds from the sale of the animal to set MaTshezi up in a clothing business. She planned to travel to Durban to buy clothes to sell locally. She also wanted to make and repair clothing for people in the village. They had not given up entirely on owning cattle and hoped to increase their cattle numbers by way of the future progeny of their one remaining heifer, which remained in Gcinikhaya's father's byre. Plans for their one daughter to study nursing after completing her secondary schooling rested firmly on securing financial assistance from Gcinikhaya's father.

In a vein that I was to encounter frequently, especially with regard to former male migrant workers, Gcinikhaya's economic fortunes had ebbed drastically over time. Within six months of his retrenchment from the mines in 1996, his retrenchment 'package' had dried up and with it his position as head of household and *intsika yekhaya* [pillar of the home] began to come under pressure. To the extent that his own skills, employment aspirations and labour featured in the future livelihood plans of the household, these were directed towards setting his wife up in business and in gardening. His predicament was brought into sharper focus by comparison with another household in Hamburg, that of the Mthozamile Raduma.

The case of Mthozamile Raduma's household

Mr. Mthozamile Raduma was a 58-year-old father of six. He had ten years of education and earned a comparatively very high salary (by village standards) as the headmaster of the primary school in a nearby village. He was married to Nokhaya who was 47 years old, 11 years his junior and a daughter of the large Gushana lineage of Hamburg. Nokhaya had several years of education (the exact number I could not establish) and made a regular if modest income from her sewing business, which she ran from home. When surveyed, five members of this eight-member household were resident in Hamburg.

Mthozamile had three daughters aged 38, 34 and 31 years. The two older daughters each had a tertiary qualification in teaching, but both were unemployed. The oldest daughter lived at home at the time, and the other daughter was single and lived in Cape Town. The youngest daughter (31) had 12 years of schooling, was married and lived in Port Elizabeth.

Mr. Raduma's oldest son, Mawethu, who had only six years of schooling, resided at home. He was 'jobbing' with Eskom. His second son, 26-year-old Lindikhaya, had recently completed a degree in agricultural science at the nearby University of Fort Hare. He had thus far been unable to find regular employment and was living at home and also 'jobbing' with Eskom. In the past month, the two young men had assisted their father financially by paying for the spare parts he needed to repair his tractor. Mr. Raduma's youngest son, Dumisa, was in the process of completing his standard ten in Port Elizabeth. When not teaching, Mr. Raduma and his sons worked in their garden and cultivated his two fields (his second field was situated on the

fertile floodplain of the Keiskamma River adjacent to the neighbouring village of Bodiam).

When surveyed, Mthozamile Raduma had 56 cattle, the second-largest herd in Hamburg.²⁷ He also owned a tractor and maintained a bank account, which he joked was 'always empty' because his tractor was so 'thirsty for diesel'. The family lived in a large modern home. They owned a colour television, lounge suite and kitchen unit as well as an electric and a gas stove. Mthozamile Raduma had plans to buy a 'decent' *bakkie* [light delivery van] in the near future to facilitate his daily journey to work and to scale up his agricultural activities.

Note that the impressive educational qualifications that the members of this household had managed to secure were not in themselves a guarantee for securing long-term employment. This was particularly as the public sector, struggling to overcome the political barriers to 'right-sizing' through retrenchments of poorly qualified teachers and other civil servants, had virtually stopped hiring teachers, nurses, policemen and the like. These qualifications did, however, allow for a measure of livelihood diversification in this household, in that, in contrast to the Mkhaya household, four people in this household were contributing to its livelihood.

Some local modes of saving and accumulation

The majority of rural people across South Africa had a rather tenuous toehold in the market domain of the economy, which was epitomised by the established banking sector.²⁸ Recent research shows that 72% of black South Africans did not have a bank account. In the Eastern Cape, this figure was as high as 79% for black women and 75% for black men. Reasons for not holding a bank account included unemployment and irregular income, distances from banks, illiteracy, innumeracy and 'blacklisting' by credit bureaus for defaulting on credit repayments.

²⁷ At an average value of R1,800 per animal, this meant that Raduma had just over R100,000 'on the hoof', which constituted a very sizeable amount of money in the context of rural Peddie District. As a school principal, he probably had a net income of around R4,000 per month.

²⁸ Nowhere was this made clearer than in the inability of many people to keep a bank account, the most elementary mechanism for transacting and, significantly, saving money in the formal economy. In the bank in Peddie, I was told that when no deposits were made into a person's account for three months, the bank concluded that the person had lost their job and closed the account.

However, despite the fact that there was only one commercial bank to serve the population of Peddie District, I found that 37% of household heads in the sample of households in Loverstwest had a bank account.²⁹ Another 17% indicated that, while they did not have a bank account, their daughter or son, who was absent from the village, had one. Two household heads indicated that they held post-office accounts, in one case in preference to a bank account. In Hamburg, 35% of household heads in the sample indicated that they had a bank account, with another 5% holding a post-office account.³⁰ I attribute these somewhat higher-than-average frequencies of bank account-holders to the fact that a relatively high proportion of households in both villages did their shopping, including buying furniture and appliances on credit, in towns, particularly King William's Town and East London, and thus necessarily had an association with banks. This relatively large proportion of bank account-holders among my sample of households also supports my argument about the overall economic integration of Peddie District into the wider regional economy. However, this does not mean that the households in the two villages who held bank accounts were in a position to save large sums of money in this way. All the evidence that I have points to the contrary being closer to the truth, except where a recently retrenched migrant worker had his 'package' deposited into a bank account and planned to make it stretch for as long as possible.

On the whole, though, maintaining a bank account with a view to registering a 'paper trail' in the market domain of the economy could be financially unrewarding. Rural people knew that, through the burden of 'bank administrative charges' and charges associated with depositing and withdrawing money, the amount of money that a person deposited into a bank might actually decrease in value over time. Moreover, travelling to the bank in Peddie town or to East London to gain access to these funds, was itself costly and time-consuming.

Local *imigalelo* [rotating credit] clubs and *masingcwabane* [lit. 'let us bury each other', burial societies], in which many rural and town-based people were active, offered a locally managed and more sociable form of sharing and (temporarily) saving money for extraordinary household expenses, such as the buying of expensive

²⁹ Eighty-two per cent of these household heads with bank accounts were male.

³⁰ Sixty-seven per cent were male.

appliances, or helping to cover the expenses of a funeral.³¹ Sixty-seven per cent of the sampled households in Loverstwit made contributions to either an *umgalelo* club, a burial society, or towards a funeral policy with an insurance company (or combinations of two of these), at an average monthly rate of R60.00 per household. In Hamburg, 52% of the households in the sample did the same, with the contributions to *imigalelo* with members who were employed generally higher (R100-R250).

Ukwakh'umzi, masincedisane and the politics of 'rural' livelihoods

The sharing of resources between households by means of *masincedisane*, i.e. good neighbourliness or mutual assistance, has already been alluded to and was much in evidence in both villages, and included organised bodies, such as church groups, credit associations, burial societies and more informal sharing, such as neighbours helping each other. However, credit associations and (to a lesser extent) burial societies tended to exclude the households that were without a reliable source of cash income to make the regular contributions. In Hamburg in particular, because it was more differentiated yet with poor and wealthier people living cheek-by-jowl, other forms of the *masincedisane* norm may be expected to play an especially important part in flattening out inter-household socio-economic differences.

These other forms of sharing between households were, however, frequently undermined by an emphasis on the norm of *ukwakh'umzi*. For one thing, Hamburg had more, and longer-established, lineages that co-operated (and, of course, competed) internally to a greater extent. Because of family tensions and conflicts, however, there was a much greater preference for residential separation from one's parents, siblings and other kin relations than was the case in Loverstwit.

The move to households that had fewer *de jure* members, but that nevertheless retained a moral and ritual connection to their respective natal *imizi*, was demonstrated by the development in the early 1990s of an 'informal' settlement known as *Ndlovini* on the outskirts of Hamburg village. In significant ways, however, this residential separation of kin threatened the longer-term rhetorical and practical overlap between membership of actual households – that generally organised their

³¹ The respondents to this question did not clearly distinguish their payments to these various clubs and societies. When pressed, many people felt that these were merely variations on a theme that did not need to be categorised rigorously.

domestic labour and consumed independently of other households – and of homesteads – that obviously had kinship-based, but also the other moral and ritual underpinnings. It is significant that this contraction of the household had not occurred in Loverstvist, which contrasts with Hamburg in this regard.

With the livelihood insecurity that most households faced, residential separation places greater demands on, and thus greater contestation over, the nature and norms of household-level sharing, including *ukwakh'umzi* [to build the homestead] and *masincedisane* [let us help each other]. Where household membership had shrunk in size due to labour migration or other forms of residential separation, livelihood strategies had to be adapted. Some livelihoods, such as field cultivation or livestock production, became less viable, given the reduced labour in the household. To maintain these livelihoods, other options that assist to redistribute the available labour in the village had to be entertained. These included more selective co-operation with neighbours, such as entering into sharecropping arrangements or agreements to share herding responsibilities. Alternatively, people might decide to pay outside helpers to assist with the day-to-day tasks relating to livelihoods and social reproduction (cf. Waller 1999: 24; McAllister 1992: 204).

While especially male household heads, benefiting from the patriarchal dividend (see Connell 1995), enjoyed some success in controlling the labour (and incomes) of the younger members of their households, this was a source of considerable tension in many households in Loverstvist and Hamburg. Since the mid-1970s, it has become more difficult for sons to secure employment that will allow them to marry and to establish their own homesteads. In many cases, their membership of their natal home might continue to be recognised indefinitely, but their status in the village would suffer, because they were regarded as being unable to *uzimele* [stand alone] as men. On the other hand, unmarried sons and daughters who were insecurely employed (or 'jobbing') in town were under considerable pressure to send remittances to their natal homesteads to contribute to the project of *ukwakh'umzi* [building the home]. Their attempts to secure a livelihood were also subject to constant and painful public scrutiny by other household members and everyone else, particularly their age-mates, in the village.

In the interests of brevity, I have placed a case-study of a young man's tribulations in respect of *ukwakh'umzi*, together with the extended case-study of the household of Ma'am Gitywa who, by the accounts of people in other homesteads in Hamburg, failed to live up to the expectations of the *masincedisane* norm, in Appendix Two.

An inward-turning/outward-engaging investment orientation

In this short, final section of this chapter, I initiate an exploration of why certain households in rural Peddie District were more inclined to invest in agrarian production (notably cattle-holding) than others. I emphasise the economic and social 'orientation' of each household (cf. Ainslie 1999; Mayer 1980b: 38). This approach, while it emphasises livelihoods and accumulation strategies, also touches on the identity and lifestyle aspirations, choices and decisions of the individual members of each household. In this, I have drawn on some of Ferguson's (1999) insights in his acclaimed recent book, *Expectations of Modernity*. Ferguson's exposition of urban Zambian identity and cultural styles is particularly compelling. He shows how people's choice of a 'localist' or 'cosmopolitan' cultural style is informed by their experience of sustained economic collapse in Zambia.

His approach regarding these cultural styles owes something, it seems to me, to the pioneering work of Mayer & Mayer (1971[1961]) on 'Red' and 'School' Xhosa in and around East London and tends to suffer from some of the same limitations (see Mafeje 1963: 206ff). Principal among these limitations is the explicit dualism of Ferguson's two contrasting categories, which Sharp (2001: 154) is quick to point out in his review of Ferguson's book. In his own stimulating discussion of identity among Xhosa-speakers in the townships of Cape Town, Sharp argues that, in terms of the ways the residents of *Joe Slovo Park* construct and contest their identities and cultural styles, 'Xhosa tradition' and 'Western' consumerism are not mutually opposing or exclusive styles or value systems for these people. The extent of context-specific hybridity, he suggests, shows that 'Cape Town is far too complex a context to approach from a dualist perspective of any kind' (Sharp 2001: 157). I argue that geographically 'stretched' places like Peddie District, characterised by intensive movements of people between town and country, are similarly too complex. As such, dualist characterisations do not exhaust the 'full repertoire' of people's 'cognitive

mapping' of *relational* (i.e. rural-urban) and *local* cultural differences, specifically in the ways that these differences relate to livelihood options over time (Sharp 2001: 157; Robins 1997).

In Peddie District, the first level of complexity concerns the contestation over cultural styles within the household. The dispersal of household members between urban, peri-urban and rural areas could make these struggles particularly fraught, especially when household members were assembled in one place, for instance, at a funeral or *umsebenzi* [ritual 'work' – see Chapter Eight]. Intra-household struggles over cultural style were underpinned by generational and gender differences (given the normative Xhosa division of labour), while class and religious affiliation were also differences that provoke contests over the dominant identity or cultural style adopted by particular households. I use evidence of agrarian investments, specifically in cattle ownership, as an indicator of the economic orientation of a household, ever-mindful of the fact that this orientation did not necessarily overlap with the cultural style that a household – not to mention its constituent members – adopted. Indeed, the cultural style of the household was likely to change with the changing economic fortunes of the household, particularly its head, over time.

Having reviewed the data I collected, my sense is that it was the extent to which the pursuit of livelihood and accumulation strategies – whether characterised as constituting the *inward-turning* or *outward-engaging* orientations – could be converted into social status that guided a household's accumulation strategies, at least over the medium term. Investments by a few wealthier households in self-consciously consumer goods such as a satellite dish or an off-the-shelf pit latrine, were objects of curiosity and envy for a short while.³² Young men in particular were keen to watch international football matches that were only screened on satellite television channels. But, given the fractious nature of 'community' in rural Peddie District, and the limited arena for investments in socially meaningful rural assets, it was an open question how such individualist investments in objects of consumer culture – a particularly anti-social

³² A fibreglass latrine cost around R600,00 – more than the value of one month's old age pension during my fieldwork period. The pit latrines of most homesteads were constructed locally from old bits of corrugated iron fixed to a timber frame, which was placed over a hole dug to about 1,5 –2m deep. Significantly, the construction of a pit latrine – the work of young men – would take about two days to complete and would earn a young man between R50 and R100.

(i.e. contradictory) case of *ukwakh'umzi* – would contribute to the status and the social standing of these households in the longer term, particularly among senior men and women in the village. Sustaining a subscription to satellite television would, for instance, have placed strain on the household budget, without obvious long-term social returns in the village.

By contrast, investments in cattle and to a lesser extent in a tractor or *bakkie*, both of which could be utilised to help other people and households in particular contexts, went much further towards bolstering the local social standing of a household. This was because of the high convertibility of cattle, relative to other assets, in two spheres. Firstly, barring losses to one's herd through drought, cattle guaranteed a future income stream. Secondly, households that held cattle were able to spread resources around the village in the spirit of *masincedisane*, such that these cattle were readily converted into increased social status.

Conclusions

In this discussion of 'rural' livelihoods in Loverstwest and Hamburg, I have pointed to the rather limited range of reliable livelihood options that were available to people for their long-term accumulation strategies. Given their livelihood vulnerability, one option rural people had was to manipulate the form of their household by dispersing or augmenting the members of their households in various ways and over time.

Twenty years ago, De Wet and McAllister (1983: 65) wrote of 'a rural situation [in the Eastern Cape] in which the overwhelming trend has been towards greater and greater impoverishment of the people through both drawing them into the wider economy and preventing them from fully sharing in the fruits of that economy'. The current reliance on a small range of *dominant* household income sources was evidence that this was being played out. I have pointed out the importance of both structural and contingent local differences in the construction of local livelihoods, such as the higher number of formally employed people whose earnings were diffused into the Hamburg economy. This made the 'informal-sector' livelihoods in Hamburg more robust and far more viable in Hamburg than in Loverstwest.

I have highlighted the role that education played in affording people improved chances of securing reliable employment. I have also indicated that in many households educational advancement in 'traditional' careers such as nursing, teaching and the agricultural sciences had become more likely to leave graduates stranded in the race for jobs in the stagnant public sector.

I have pointed out that, notwithstanding the widespread self-provisioning use of natural resources, the majority of households in Loverstwiss and Hamburg did not have diversified livelihoods. This has two important implications. Firstly, it meant that most households remained vulnerable to economic shocks, such as the loss of pension income upon the death of a grant recipient in the household. Secondly, it placed the spotlight firmly on the rather limited range of assets that continued to offer people high convertibility over time. One of these assets was cattle.

CHAPTER FIVE

The distribution of cattle-holdings and the costs of cattle production in Peddie District

If a man has a few cows and that's all he has in life, he must hang onto them. If he loses them, even if he has money, he may never be able to buy more. Why? Because he sells a beast for R600 at the stocksale. Then he goes to Van der Merwe, the farmer, to buy two weaners [but] they cost R1,200 and R1,500. [So] he goes home with no animals (Interview with Mr. Siza Manjezi, 15 September 1999).

Introduction

Having explored some aspects of people's 'rural' livelihoods in Peddie District, I now turn to an examination of where cattle-holding fitted into this picture. In the first part of this chapter, I review the quality of available data on cattle-holdings in Peddie District and discuss the difficulty of drawing any hard conclusions from these data. In the second part of the chapter, I present data from the structured questionnaire which I administered (with the assistance of Welile Mzozoyana) to a stratified sample of 48 of the cattle-holding households across the district during 1999. I briefly consider the costs of acquiring and keeping cattle.

In the third section of the chapter, I reflect on some of the sociological features of cattle-holding households in the two villages of Loverstwest and Hamburg.¹ Making use of the 'Livelihood Survey' which we administered to 90 households in the two villages, I present a short analysis of some of the similarities and differences between the households that held cattle and those that were without cattle when the surveys were conducted.

To conclude the chapter, I suggest that changes in cattle holdings are a useful (and thus far neglected) index for understanding longer-term changes in wealth and poverty indices and investments in agrarian livelihoods at different levels (household, village, district) in the former bantustans of the Eastern Cape Province.

¹ In Appendix Five, I present some data on herd structure and production indices from the 'Herd Survey' census that my research assistants and I administered to all cattle-holding households in Loverstwest and Hamburg.

To start, though, I must explain my use of certain terms. All my informants argued that cattle-loaning between households had declined sharply since the 1940s and 1950s (younger people in rural Peddie District had never heard of *ukunqoma*), and hence that issues around the ownership of the cattle in a particular byre were clearer now than in the past. Nevertheless it was not always possible to distinguish between the cattle *held* by a household and the cattle actually *owned* (in the legal sense) by various members of the same household. Furthermore, there was the issue of cattle held in the byre of homestead A that were owned by someone from homestead B (cf. Beinart 1992).² In most cases it took long and careful probing to find out just how many of the cattle in a particular byre were in fact owned by that household and how the ownership of these cattle is distributed within the household. I thus use the term ‘cattle-holding’ throughout this chapter to indicate this.³

The quality of data on cattle-holdings in Peddie District

During the 1990s, the Department of Agriculture in the Eastern Cape Province inherited a programme of free ‘Blanthrax’ inoculations for all the cattle in those areas of the former bantustans that were susceptible to *blackwater* and *anthrax* diseases. Administering the inoculation presented the Department with an opportunity to conduct an annual census of cattle numbers and to check the numbers of cattle inoculated against the dipping registers. For decades, the recording of cattle numbers had taken place at the dip-tank, but I found that these records were hard to come by, and were not particularly reliable, especially for the Ciskeian reserves (Ainslie 2002c). Rural people were understandably suspicious of the motives of the authorities in wanting to keep records of their animal numbers and they resisted this by failing to present their cattle for dipping enough of the time to bedevil the accurate recording of cattle numbers. As mentioned in Chapter Three, some of the holders of large herds loaned their animals out to kinsmen in other areas in order both to evade the counting of their herds and to minimise the risk of stock losses during times of drought (Brown 1971: 177). Another strategy was to maintain ‘ghost herds’, in which people would

² Hodgson (2000a: 11) argues that ‘ownership’ itself is a historical category, with associated presumptions about private property, alienability, and individual control that differ from more communal and cooperative notions of rights and responsibilities.

³ Having said that, by far the majority of cattle held in the villages of Peddie District were actually *owned* by people who were resident or had strong attachments to homesteads in the district. This meant that ‘absentee owners’, about whom much was made in earlier literature, were not a major factor here.

dip half their herds on one occasion and the other half on the next occasion, thus contributing to a 50% undercount of these herds. People could also evade the monitoring of their cattle numbers by selectively failing to register the births, deaths, sales and slaughter for home consumption (Tapson 1982; Hendricks 1991). Eighty year-old Mr. Maramba in Peddie Extension told me in 1999 that ‘it is not exactly that I am hiding some cattle [kept in another village], it is just that I have cattle there that are not [recorded] on my dipping card.’

A further confounding factor in the former Ciskeian reserves related to its ‘chequerboard’ settlement pattern, with blocks of white-owned farms interspersed between reserve areas under communal tenure. Earlier cattle records did not always differentiate satisfactorily between the cattle of the white farmer and of his employees and the cattle of the people in adjacent communal reserves, with varying numbers of these cattle all dipped at the nearest functional dip-tank. This problem was carried through into the post-1994 situation, where the dipping of the cattle of (black) commercial farmers and the (former farmworker) people occupying freehold farms in Peddie District was not subsidised by the state. To gain access to free dip for their cattle particularly during the summer months of serious tick infestations, some of these farmers would dip their cattle in the communal reserve areas adjacent to their farms. These complications afforded the households that held cattle considerable room to manoeuvre if they were set on evading the authorities’ attempts to count their cattle. The dipping foremen’s role was critical here and only in a situation in which a dedicated dipping foreman took the trouble to engage continuously in the anti-social ‘detective work’ of trying to keep abreast of all the changes in local cattle production, exchange and consumption of cattle (his own cattle often included) was there any hope of keeping accurate records at this level. In practice, the numbers recorded at the dip-tank were liable to ‘correction’ to bring them in line with previous census data once they were submitted and aggregated at the district level.

This situation deteriorated further in the late 1990s, when the Department of Agriculture failed to budget adequately for the purchase and supply of acaricides, so that the only leverage the dipping foremen had enjoyed fell away. As a result, cattle-holding households were encouraged to pool their resources and buy dip for their cattle and consequently had little interest in assisting the dipping foreman to keep his cattle

records up to date. Thus the data on cattle numbers for any particular locality of the former Ciskeian reserves have long been little more than educated guesswork on the part of dipping foremen and local authorities and should be treated with caution.

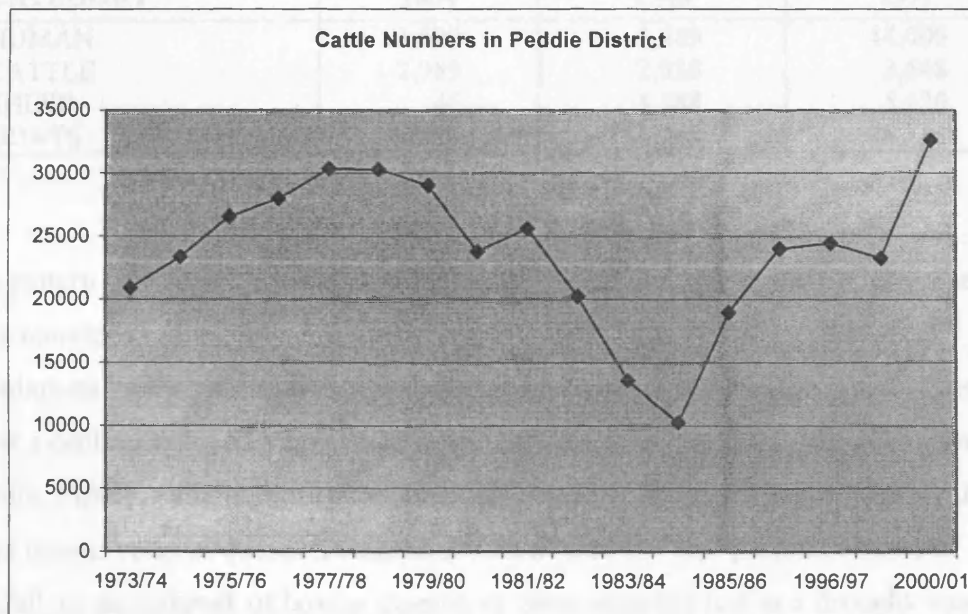
Notwithstanding all these pitfalls, veterinary personnel in the Department of Agriculture were under the impression that gross numbers of cattle in the Ciskeian reserve areas (and those of Peddie District in particular) had remained fairly constant over time since at least the early 1960s, other than during and immediately after periods of drought.⁴

The cattle register for the year 1978 that I retrieved from the dipping foreman for the dip-tank in Hamburg - which was used by residents of Hamburg and eNtilini villages as well as the people resident on the adjacent farms - told an interesting story. It showed that registered cattle numbers stood at 1,643 in July 1978. These cattle were registered in the names of 158 people (although I do not know what proportion of households in the village this represented). Figure 5.1. shows that 1978 was the year in which cattle numbers in Peddie District were at their highest for the 25-year period 1973-1998. In the July 1998 'Blanthrax' census, there were 1,494 cattle registered in the names of 150 people at the same dip-tank. This represents an overall decline of 9% in cattle numbers and a 5% decline in registered holders of cattle. It is noteworthy that, of the 65 herds that were still registered in the same name and could thus be easily traced over the 20-year period, 25 (38%) registered declines of more than three animals, 20 (31%) indicated that their herd sizes had increased by more than three animals, and 20 (31%) registered that their holdings were within a three-animal range (more or less) of their herds in 1978.

⁴ There was a sequence of drought (in 1968), floods (in 1970), another drought (in 1972) and flood (in 1974). A devastating drought occurred in 1982-1984. As indicated, the five-year period 1994-1998 was one of higher-than-average annual rainfall in Peddie District, which should have allowed people's herd sizes to build up. I do not go into the debate about the the notional 'ecological carrying capacity' that might characterise the forage/cattle relationship in Hamburg. In essence, what this means is that, because animal numbers of a finite area stay close to or at this carrying capacity, they survive at a 'maintenance' level and the annual increase in the size of the overall herd matches off-take (deaths, sales, home-slaughter). Effectively, the overall herd is in 'equilibrium' with the available grazing resources at a low level of productivity, in line with a low level of management inputs. What this model ignores is the availability and use of key resource areas, such as neighbouring farms, the fact that cattle are sold or moved to other areas, that people hand-nursed the calves of cows with tick-damaged udders, etc. (cf. Vetter's [2003] study of livestock and grazing management in Herschel District, Eastern Cape).

Actual statistics on cattle numbers for the reserve areas of Peddie District, although they had apparently been recorded, were simply not available for many years, particularly in the 1960s and again for most years in the period 1987-2000. I was assured by the State Veterinarian that during the period 1986-1997 all the cattle census data for the former Ciskei areas were kept in a 'filing cabinet' in the regional Animal Health Clinic in Zwelitsha.⁵ Despite my sustained efforts to locate it, this filing cabinet remained unaccounted for, as did the records it apparently housed. Anything but the gross numbers of cattle in the reserve areas remain largely unknown.⁶

Figure 5.1. The number of cattle in Peddie District, 1973-2001.



Moreover, the proportion of cattle-holding (and cattle-owning) households remains nothing more than an informed estimate, even after two post-apartheid population censuses, firstly because official figures on the number of households seemed

⁵ I conducted several interviews with Dr. Nick Fischer, State Veterinarian for Peddie District, and Ms. Lulama Mpati, the (acting) Control Animal Health Technician in Peddie District, during the period 1998-2001.

⁶ I was given permission by individuals to record the information on their stock registers ('dipping card'). Some old men had retained their dipping cards from the early 1970s and I could build up a picture of the periodic increases and decreases in local herd sizes. But in their efforts to thwart the authorities, some people managed to 'lose' their dipping cards or to fudge the recording of information in them, so that these cards too are not the key to understanding cattle-holdings.

inaccurate (and were subject both to blurring between the notions of household and homestead and some manipulation at the point of enumeration, because the household was a key unit of delivery for government services).⁷ Secondly, these estimations remain problematic because of the difficulty mentioned above of determining actual cattle ownership. Thus all discussion on the numbers of cattle and their distribution remains conjectural in the absence of reliable and context-rich longitudinal data. Consider the livestock data I located for the Tyefu Location of Peddie District (Ainslie 1998).

Table 5.1. Human and livestock populations in Tyefu Location

POPULATION CATEGORY	YEAR OF CENSUS		
	1854	1946	1997
HUMAN	1,509	4,889	14,000
CATTLE	2,989	2,938	3,548
SHEEP	46	5,388	5,120
GOATS	514	18,464	14,488

The pattern described above is clear in Table 5.1, i.e. that aggregate cattle numbers have remained remarkably constant over time, while human and small stock populations increased dramatically, although both the number of sheep and goats show a decline in the 51 years since 1946. But this is only a small part of the overall picture. Firstly, without more contextual information, we do not know whether the three census years in question coincided with a ‘wet’ or ‘dry’ period in terms of rainfall, or an outbreak of bovine disease, or were recorded just as a drought was ending.

Essentially, the data are synchronic, with each data-set representing a snapshot of part of the situation that prevailed at that time. Without accurate longitudinal rainfall figures, and reliable records on sales, exchanges, home-slaughter, births and deaths at regular intervals over the 143-year period, we cannot deduce much from these numbers. Secondly, we learn nothing about the structure (cow/heifer/bull/ox) of the overall (cattle) herd in the location, much less the structure of the herds held by

⁷ The population estimate for Peddie District dropped from 89,000 in 1994 (Ainslie *et. al* 1997: 13) to 61,000 people (living in 13,700 households) in 1996 (Statistics South Africa 1998).

individual households. Moreover, it is possible that, because of changes to the vegetation structure and the quality of forage resources, the average size and weights of the individual cattle decreased over time and that many of the cows in these herds might well have been in a 'maintenance' condition of low fertility and negligible milk yield (see Moll [1988], who quotes Rutman [1972: 147] on this point). In other words, a typical cow in 1946 *may* well have been smaller, have provided less milk and reproduced less frequently than did a cow in 1854 (notwithstanding an almost identical overall herd size).

Thirdly, we learn nothing (from the data presented in Table 5.1.) of the actual distribution of cattle 'ownership' among the population, whether cattle-holdings became more or less concentrated over this period, and how this changed in relation to the increase in the human population and the changing structure of the homestead as a social and economic unit (cf. McAllister 1992). Fourthly, we are none the wiser about the factors that underpin the gross changes in animal numbers we observe, that is, the possible range of constraints or opportunities that emerged in the local economy and the wider political economy that had an impact on patterns of cattle-holding at these three moments. Fifthly, as the data show, it can be dangerous to consider long-term trends in cattle numbers in isolation from changes in the numbers of goats and sheep in the same area. These changes may provide important clues to significant changes in the ratio of grazing to browsing resources over time (Fabricius 1997).

Characterising cattle-holding households in Peddie District

There was a considerable increase in the number and presumably the diversity of people and households in rural Peddie District in the period since the early 1960s (see Ainslie 1999). Given that there were also serious droughts that struck the reserve areas of Peddie District in 1968, 1972 and especially 1982-84 (and to a lesser extent, 1991-92), which had a negative impact on animal numbers in the district, just who were the cattle-holding households in 1998?

Despite the reservations I have outlined, I make use of the data-set that I derived from the 1998 'Blanthrax' inoculation to characterise what I estimate to be the roughly

28% of the households that held cattle in Peddie District in 1998.⁸ The records of the names of cattle-holders and the numbers of cattle they reportedly held indicated that in July 1998 there were 2,644 cattle-holders in the reserve areas of Peddie District. These people held just over 23,200 cattle in the ratios outlined in Table 5.2.⁹

Table 5.2. Numbers of cattle holders in Peddie District by herd size as at July 1998.¹⁰

CATTLE HELD	No. OF HOLDERS	% OF TOTAL OWNERS
1-6 cattle	1 412	53
7-12 cattle	691	26
13-20 cattle	323	12
21 and upwards	218	8
TOTAL	2 644	~100

Firstly, the data from the 1998 'Blanthrax' register (see Table 5.2), indicate that more than half (some 53%) of the population of cattle-holding households held six or fewer head of cattle.¹¹ In fact, nearly 80% of the cattle-holding households held 12 or fewer cattle. At the other end of the scale, just over eight per cent of cattle-holding households had 21 or more head of cattle. Among the households that held cattle, these animals were thus relatively evenly (and thinly) spread across households. This could be an indication of the difficulties that rural households encountered in trying to rebuild their herds in the aftermath of recurring episodes of drought. The deteriorating animal health regime during the early to mid-1990s, considerable contestation over grazing resources and a general decline in household livelihood prospects would have contributed to these difficulties. It also suggests that

⁸ Ainslie *et al.* (1997: 81) indicated that in a sample of 379 households in six villages in Peddie District, 31% of these households held one or more (bovine) animal. See Manona (1998: 115) for a similar proportion of cattle-holding households in Melani village, in the neighbouring, inland district of Alice. The data I collected in the higher-rainfall, two coastal area villages of Loverstwest and Hamburg indicated proportions of 36% and 41% respectively, evidence that cattle-holding was a more attractive investment in these areas than in some of the drier inland villages (although higher rainfall and more grazing did not exhaust the reasons for the higher proportion of cattle-holding households).

⁹ Despite the satisfaction on the part of the veterinary services about the coverage of this programme, it is likely that this constituted an undercount, as not all cattle-holders would have presented their cattle for inoculation. Many people, especially in Tyefu Location, believed that the government's inoculations and vaccinations were what made their cattle sick and actively avoided presenting their animals, such that the veterinary staff had to threaten to prosecute them. Also, those people who were avoiding the dipping register were likely to have avoided the 'Blanthrax' inoculation as well.

¹⁰ A further 893 (25% of the overall, cumulative total) names were still listed on the register, but were recorded as no longer having any cattle.

¹¹ Note that 'cattle' refers to units of bovine animals of any size and not to large stock units (LSU).

many households were either unable (because of limited means and/or labour constraints) or unwilling to invest more than a limited amount of their scarce resources in the restocking of their byres and the husbanding of their cattle.

Characterising the households that hold cattle in Peddie District ¹²

The average age of the household heads (both men and women) in my 1999 district-wide sample of 48 cattle-owning households was 62 years (see Table 5.3). ¹³ As many as 46% of the household heads were 65 years and older, and the average age of this group was as high as 71 years of age. ¹⁴ It is also remarkable that nine of the household heads (19% of the sample) were older than 80 years of age. With just 11% of the rural population of the district said to consist of men and women 61 years of age and older (Statistics South Africa, Census 1996; also see Lloyd and Levin 1995: 4,73), and given the fact that the 22 households (46%) with the heads of household over 65 years of age held the highest category average of 9,5 head of cattle, it was clear that a significant generational concentration of bovine wealth in the hands of this category of older heads of households was a feature of this sector.

Table 5.3. Age distribution of the heads of cattle-holding households in the 1999 district-wide survey and their respective cattle-holdings (n=48)

AGE OF H/HOLD HEAD	No. OF H/HOLDS	%	No. OF CATTLE HELD	AVERAGE HOLDINGS
Up to 40 years	6	13	55	9,2
41 to 64 years	18	38	143	7,9
65 years plus	22	46	209	9,5
Do not know	2	4	14	7
Total	48	~100	421	8,8

¹² See Ainslie (2002e) for the sample selection procedure that was followed before administering this questionnaire schedule during 1999.

¹³ The notion of household head is not unproblematic given the local context of extensive rural-urban mobility, which dispersed members of the household and affected the ways in which day-to-day decisions were made within such households. The determination of household headship that I adopt here was that decided by my informants themselves. In every case, they had an unambiguous, even emphatic, response to this question, which does not, of course, negate the reservations expressed above (see Guyer & Peters 1987; Niehaus 1994).

¹⁴ In Loverstwit this age category headed 42% of all cattle-holding households, while in Hamburg the proportion was 36%.

For the remaining 24 households in this survey for which data were available on the age of the household head, the average cattle-holding was only 8,3 head.¹⁵ The detailed herd surveys conducted in Loverstwist and Hamburg showed, however, that the age category 41-64 years of age dominated in terms of total number of cattle under their control and (in Hamburg) also average herd size per household. In Loverstwist, the age category up to 40 years, although only comprising three (out of 47) households, had the highest average holdings (8 cattle per household).

Gender aspects of cattle-holding

It is not always clear what exactly the concept 'female-headed households' entails in the context of the varied and dynamic household structures and livelihood sources observed in the rural context studied. Where and with whom, in these situations, does domestic authority lie and how are relationships within and beyond the household mediated? Critically, given a particular constellation of these variables, who in a specific household or extended kin-group has primary authority over the 'family herd' of cattle? I address these questions in the three chapters that follow this one,

Table 5.4. Gender distribution of the heads of cattle-holding household in Peddie District (n=48)

H/HOLD HEADS BY GENDER	No. OF H/HOLDS	%
H/holds headed by men	38	79
H/holds headed by women	10	21
Total	48	100

The significantly gendered pattern of cattle-holdings in the reserve areas of Peddie District is confirmed by Table 5.4 which indicates that households headed by women constituted a mere 21% of the cattle-holding households in our sample. This means

¹⁵ The small sample size is problematic here, as the high average cattle per household for the senior (65 years and over) category was skewed by one household which held 47 head of cattle. This constituted the biggest herd held in the entire sample of 48 households. By excluding this household, the average for this category dropped to 7,7 head per household, which was then the lowest in the survey. However, excluding the biggest herd in each (household head) age category (i.e. 30 and 24 animals in the first two categories respectively), meant that the senior age category (over 65 years) again had the highest average number of cattle (7,7 per household, as opposed to 5 and 7 cattle per household respectively). The fact is that bovine wealth was concentrated in the households with senior men as their heads (see Chapter Six), although this was somewhat less pronounced in the villages that lay to the east of the town of Peddie.

that cattle were overwhelmingly concentrated in the rural households headed by senior men.¹⁶ It is instructive to compare this with the 1996 Census data which indicate that some 54% of the households in the district as a whole were headed by women.

Six of the female household heads in the sample (i.e. 60% of the 10 female-headed households) indicated that they were widows and had inherited cattle when their husbands died. In the case of another household, a widow did not inherit her husband's two cattle as these were claimed by the two brothers of the deceased man. The cattle were herded by her deceased husband's older patrilineal relative who was resident in the village. While she claimed to be the head of this household, it emerged that her authority did not extend to the two cattle held by the *umzi* [homestead]. As long as her only reliable source of livelihood was the occasional remittances from these brothers-in-law who both lived and worked in East London, she was in no position to contest the ownership of these cattle. This was very different from the position of two other women, one of whom was *MaDlamini* Mzantsi of Rura village.

A never-married woman, *MaDlamini* Mzantsi, was an old-age pensioner in her sixties. She explained that the family herd of 13 cattle was under her control. When her father died in 1950, the dipping card was changed into her mother's name at the magistrate [sic]. While *MaDlamini* and her brother both worked in Port Elizabeth, they bought cattle for their parents' homestead in the village. Upon her mother's death in 1978, the card was changed into her name, 'as the first-born child'. She and her younger brother co-operated very well. He used to say, 'Sisi, you decide', whenever a decision about the homestead and its assets needed to be made. *MaDlamini*'s brother died in 1983 and at the time of the interview she lived with his daughter (Mimi) in the family's original homestead. A determined old woman, *MaDlamini* had previously taken a young man whom she had employed as a herder (at R50/month) to court because he had taken her cattle to his girlfriend's house and tried to pass them off as his own. She recovered her cattle. She recently sold a heifer in Rura village for R1,500 in order to pay the student fees of her 'grandson' (her

¹⁶ But see Manona (1998: 115) who notes that 43% of the cattle-holding households in Melani village in the neighbouring district of Alice were headed by women, all of whom were widows.

brother's daughter's son) who was a nursing student in Cape Town. The heifer was bought by a person in the same village who wanted to build his herd.

Interestingly, the range of ages for the ten female-headed households in the district-wide sample was wide, as Table 5.5 suggests.

Table 5.5. Age distribution and average holdings of female-headed households that held cattle in sample of Peddie District 1999 (n=10)

AGE OF H/H HEAD	No. OF H/HOLDS	AVERAGE HOLDINGS
Up to 40 years	2	2,5
41 to 64 years	4	9,5
65 years plus	4	6,3
Total	10	6,8

Table 5.5 also shows that these ten female-headed households held a total of 68 cattle at an average of 6,8 cattle per household. This is lower than the overall average of 8,8 cattle per household for the 48 sampled households, but it masks the fact that four of these ten households had ten or more cattle (i.e. more than the average), and suggests that the gender of the household head was not a decisive factor in predicting the number of cattle held. It is noticeable that the age category 41-64 years of age held the most cattle on average. Other important considerations in understanding the factors that played out in female-headed household that held cattle were issues such as the number of cattle that were inherited by the widowed household head. If these cattle constituted a viable herd in terms of the proportion of fertile cows, then there was a good chance that the integrity of the herd would be maintained over time. The point is that women as household heads were not opposed to keeping cattle and were well aware of the monetary and social benefits of doing so. Other than as widows inheriting cattle, they were more restricted in the sense that they had fewer socially acceptable routes available to them to gain initial entry into the male-dominated cattle economy.¹⁷ The most common route was for women to take control of the *umzi* herd when their husbands passed away. Once in this position, they could augment the herd

¹⁷ Mrs. Makhulo in Hamburg was exceptional here. She was in her mid-50s, married and was a practising *igqira* [traditional healer]. In about 1991, she unexpectedly received a heifer as payment from one of her patients. From that time, she switched to charging people in cattle and not in cash. This was how this Makhulo household started keeping cattle.

by buying in cattle or by demanding cattle as bridewealth or as ‘damages’ (in the case of premarital pregnancy) for their daughters.

It emerged that the survival or growth of the herd, as in male-headed households, was dependent upon the continuous availability and reliability of male labour in the household or agnatic cluster to perform routine animal husbandry tasks. In each of the ten households headed by women, the household heads indicated that they consulted their adult sons (and sometimes daughters) or other kin (especially on their husband’s side) when making decisions about the overall management (including any intended sale or ritual slaughter) of these cattle. In these circumstances, a widow’s role was often regarded, especially by her adult sons, as simply that of ‘keeping’ the cattle, i.e. acting as guardian of the cattle, for the eldest son of her deceased husband.¹⁸ But her ‘mother-manager’ role (see Jones 1996) could be much more active and decisive than that, depending on the gender and generational dynamics and livelihood circumstances that prevailed within particular households. Indeed, my more detailed research into cattle-holding, especially in Hamburg, revealed several cases of widows who had been guardians of the *umzi* herd for periods of more than twenty-five years.

Educational profiles of cattle holders

There is a notion that cattle-holding in the former bantustans was the preserve of the poorly educated or, conversely, that educated rural people were least likely to keep cattle. Indeed, Table 5.6 shows that as many as 33% of the household heads in the sample had never been to school. The 1996 Census pegged the proportion of unschooled adults in these age categories at 27% for the whole of Peddie District. In other words, the district-wide sample of cattle-holding households did not fare much worse than the average adult in the district, particularly considering the severely limited educational opportunities that were available in the 1940s and 1950s to the numerically dominant older cohort of heads of cattle-holding households.¹⁹ A further 30% of the household heads in my Peddie sample had enjoyed less than seven years of formal education. In fact, only 10% of the sample had a standard nine (11 years of

¹⁸ In certain circumstances, it could be the youngest son who inherited the *umzi* and family herd.

¹⁹ There were, for instance, some poorly educated household heads whose children and grandchildren were well-educated. Although I have data on the education levels of all household members in the district-wide sample, I do not make comparisons between households on the basis of the overall educational ‘profile’ of the different households here.

schooling) or higher level of education. It is significant though, that this matched exactly the proportion quoted for this group in Peddie District in the 1996 Census. Of those with at least 11 years of schooling, only two household heads (4% of the sample) had a tertiary education, and both of these people had teaching diplomas.

Table 5.6. Levels of education of household heads in the district-wide sample of cattle-holding households (n=48)

No. OF YEARS OF SCHOOLING	No. OF H/HOLD HEADS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL	AVERAGE CATTLE per HOUSEHOLD
No formal education	16	33	11
1-6 years	14	29	7
7-10 years	8	17	8
11-12 years	3	6	10
Tertiary	2	4	17
No Response	5	10	9
Total	48	100	8,8

According to the 1996 Census, a paltry 1,5% of the people who were resident in the district had any form of tertiary education/training (including a post-secondary 'certificate' of any kind). In other words, *most* people resident in Peddie District were relatively poorly educated in the formal sense. As the data presented above show, however, this does not mean that cattle-holdership was exclusively the preserve of the formally less educated. In fact, it is interesting to note that no correlation appeared to exist between average numbers of cattle held and the education levels of household heads in the sample. The households with the highest and second-highest average numbers of cattle were drawn from those with the most and the least formal education respectively. After some discussion about this matter, my research assistant, Patrick Gusha, gave me his considered opinion on who would own cattle in future:

In future, there will be two groups of people with most of the cattle. *Amaqaba* [uneducated people] who will *fuzza* [rear livestock], you know, concentrating on cattle, just like their parents have done before. In Hamburg, most of the cattle will be in *Qolweni* [section] as the *maqaba* there have long invested their money in cattle. [Then there will be] the educated people, like Khayaletu and Mthozamile, who have learned about cattle and money, and have money to buy things and farm properly. [These two groups will be the]...serious farmers with many cattle. [As

for] the other people, the majority will not be following tradition and will not have enough money to *fuza* properly. They will give up having cattle in future.

As pointed out above, a higher level of formal education on the part of the (male) household head did not translate into a disinterest in cattle-holdership. This was significant in suggesting that cattle-holdership, at least to the educated *men* (see below) in Peddie District, was not anachronistic and outmoded. Where a positive correlation was most likely to exist, however, was with the almost total disinclination on the part of better-educated, never-married women, who were heads of their households, to hold cattle. One of my arguments in this thesis is that while an enhanced level of formal education quite obviously opened up new economic options and social spaces for rural people in Peddie District – and, to some extent, closed down others – this did relatively little to negate the desire on the part of many of these people, and particularly of men, to hold cattle. The modernist notion that greater exposure to education will lead to disengagement with the ‘traditional modes’ of accumulation such as cattle-holding (Sansom 1974), did not hold here, I suggest, because the opportunities for upward mobility that a typical rural education (i.e. 12 years of schooling) presented were actually minimal and in fact appeared to be declining. I have already provided some clues why this should be so in Chapter Four, and in the chapters that follow I examine this in greater detail.

Livelihoods and cattle-holding

In the interests of brevity, I want only to note the fact that for 60% of the households in the sample, old-age pensions and other state welfare transfers constituted the dominant (and often sole) source of household livelihood at the time of my fieldwork (cf. Ainslie 1999). By contrast, only 15% (7/48) of the heads of households in the district-wide sample were in salaried employment but, given the average age of household heads in the sample, this is not surprising.²⁰ What is of interest was that these seven households held a total of 98 cattle, at an average of 14 cattle per household, which is considerably higher than the average for the entire sample (8,8

²⁰ Ten per cent of the households claimed that the remittances sent by town-based members of their families were the ‘primary source’ of income for their households.

cattle per household) and again suggests an interest in the cattle economy, rather than a disengagement from it. The households that were reliant on the informal sector for their dominant source of livelihood (constituting 23% of the sample) had the lowest cattle-holdings, at an average of 8,5 cattle per household.

Acquiring cattle

The majority of households in the Peddie District-wide survey relied on the natural increase of their existing animals to build their herds. Households with sufficient cash resources were not averse to purchasing heifers from time to time to augment their herds. All households would purchase an animal if they wished to conduct a ritual and did not have a suitable animal in their family herd or if they did not wish to use one of their own animals.

It emerged that only a very small proportion (4%) of the total animals they held had been acquired through *lobolo* [bridewealth] payments, because these frequently involved the transfer of cash. Only 10% of the households in the sample indicated that they had acquired cattle in this way. Informants told me that, on the part of the prospective bride's family, it was risky to ask for cattle because then 'anything on four legs, even calves', could be delivered. The cattle of *lobolo* were said to die easily when brought from afar, because of the unfamiliar local conditions. From the prospective groom's point of view, the fact that the (negotiated) cash value of *lobolo* cattle ranged from R500 to R1,500, which was below the stock-sale price of a reasonably-sized heifer, meant it made sense to pay the *ikhazi* in cash.

More substantial were the numbers of cattle acquired through inheritance. At least 87 cattle (20% of the total number of cattle held by households in the sample) were inherited by 21% of the households.²¹ Where cattle were purchased (either to augment the herd or to slaughter in a ritual), people turned both to their neighbours and to neighbouring white and, to an increasing extent black, commercial farmers to do so (however, only 13% of the households in the sample mentioned having bought an

²¹ Ten households indicated that they had inherited cattle, but two households did not indicate the number of cattle they had inherited. The number and proportion of inherited cattle was skewed, however, by one case of inheritance, in which 53 head of cattle were inherited and then duly sold off by the children of the deceased man.

animal for slaughter purposes).²² Steyn (1988), who conducted research in the two villages of Nyaniso and Lujiko in south-central Peddie District, found that especially the post-drought rebuilding of seriously depleted herds was based almost entirely on purchases from white farmers/speculators from outside the district. A small number of these white farmers both sold cattle outright to people in Peddie District and exchanged young cattle (especially heifers) with rural people, where the white farmer provided two heifers in exchange for a full-grown ox. One of the black commercial farmers in Peddie District indicated to me that he had 'a queue of local people wanting to buy both heifers and mature cows'. Cows (and oxen) were often for use in ritual slaughter.

As discussed in Chapter Three, a further means of acquiring animals has been through the various government schemes aimed at the introduction of 'improved sires' into the reserve areas. Schemes of this nature were first introduced in the Ciskeian 'reserves' in 1949 (Steyn 1988: 320).

The costs of keeping cattle

With regard to the costs of keeping cattle, it emerged that byre maintenance was the most expensive element of keeping cattle in gross rand terms for all the households in the district-wide sample (cf. Shackleton *et al.* 2000). Byre maintenance was usually undertaken once a year, or more frequently than that if a ritual was to be conducted in the byre. In fact, a makeshift byre had to be purpose-built when hosting a ritual at a homestead that had no cattle. For those with cattle, it was necessary to build a sufficiently secure byre to contain and protect the animals at night. It is significant, however, that 60% of households in the Peddie-wide sample (n=48) did this work themselves at no or very little (direct) monetary cost for the labour component, while the remaining 40% of the sample indicated that they paid someone in cash to complete this task. This meant that this cost fell disproportionately on these households, essentially as a result of their labour deficits. For those who paid for byre maintenance, this involved paying for

²² In fact, this question was poorly phrased and did not enquire directly about cattle purchased for the purpose of herd augmentation.

- (1) the labour to chop *amahlahla* [saplings and brush] in the forest,
- (2) the transportation of the *amahlahla* by tractor and trailer, ox-drawn 'scotch' cart or bakkie to the homestead
- (3) the labour involved in the repair/rebuilding of the byre itself.

Where payment was made for byre maintenance, the payment varied between R20, which seemed to be a one-off token amount paid to small boys or a family member for their assistance, and R650 per annum when done entirely by an unrelated person in the village.²³

The second major cost incurred in cattle husbandry was that of purchasing medicines and dip for cattle. There was a significant component taken up by the cost of travel here, as people usually had to travel to King William's Town or East London to buy livestock remedies. On the other hand, people seldom made a special trip to purchase stock remedies, unless there was an emergency, and preferred to make these purchases on 'pension-day' or 'pay-day' when they were town-bound anyway.

Payment for herding also fell unevenly on some households. Thirteen per cent of the sample (6/48) indicated that they paid a herdsman to care for their cattle. As mentioned above, people tried to utilise the labour of their immediate family and even of more distant kin for this purpose. The cost of hired herders varied between R50 and R200 per month, depending on what exactly this herding entailed. Payments in kind rather than in cash were made by some households.

So what were the average costs incurred by cattle-keeping households in rural Peddie? In total, eleven of the reduced sample of forty-one households²⁴ in the Peddie survey (i.e. 27%) indicated that they had no direct costs in respect of keeping cattle. Their costs included the opportunity cost of their productive labour, much of which could be discounted, given the current high rate of unemployment, and the costs of sustaining the households members actively involved in cattle husbandry. Taken together, these

²³ At September 1999 cash values, although these had not changed in 2000-2001, when I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork.

²⁴ Information given by seven households on the *actual costs* (in rands) of keeping cattle was either vague or ambiguous and could not be used. The remaining households were asked to supply evidence of their costs. Where such evidence was not available, they were asked to give a close estimate of their expenditure.

eleven households held 100 head of cattle, with an average of just over nine head each (i.e. higher than the average of 8,8 cattle/household across the sample). This indicates that it was not simply a case of households with only two or three animals incurring minimal cost in their upkeep.

For the remaining 30 households, costs ranged from R5 per annum, in the case of people who claimed that they had never incurred any costs in relation to their cattle in the past, but had recently paid a small sum towards dipping costs, to R2,560 per annum. The total estimated outlay incurred (for the 12 months January to December 1998) by these 30 households in maintaining the 258 head of cattle they held was R13,850 per annum, at an average of R54 per animal per annum. When the cattle of the other eleven households – which incurred no cost in keeping their cattle – were included, then the overall average cost per animal of keeping cattle in Peddie (still based on our reduced sample of 41 households) dropped to R39 per annum, or just over R3 per animal per month, which was somewhat more affordable for most households.²⁵ What this average per annum cost to maintain an animal masks, however, was the highly variable costs incurred by individual households. These costs varied widely between households, partly because of the different numbers of cattle they held, but also because of their particular household circumstances (see below).

One household headed by a widow, Mrs. Matomela, held 13 cattle. Mrs. Matomela received an old-age pension and variable remittances from her children. With no-one in her household available to herd the cattle, she had to pay a herdsman R200 per month to manage the cattle. The herdsman also maintained the byre. Mrs. Matomela estimated (she had no receipts available) that she spent R160 per annum on medicines and dipping material. Her total annual outlay in maintaining her herd was thus R2,560, or some R213 monthly. Her average cost per animal was a relatively high R197 per annum (or more than R16 per animal per month).

Another household was headed by an 84-year-old man, Mr. Xesi. He and his wife each received an old-age pension. Like Mrs. Matomela, Mr. Xesi

²⁵ While recognising the inherent difficulties, Shackleton *et al.* (2000: 59) computed the monetary value of the 'economic contribution of livestock (including cattle) to livelihoods' in the former reserves across South Africa. They found that this contribution amounted to R1,200 per household per annum for all rural households in the former reserves and not only those that held livestock.

held 13 cattle (he also had 6 sheep). Mr. Xesi and his son did all the herding of the cattle themselves. He paid R300 per annum for byre maintenance and a further R40 per annum for stock medicines and inoculations. His total annual outlay was thus R340 or just over R28 per month. While Mr. Xesi probably did have an outlay (which he failed to disclose), i.e. that of occasionally giving his son some money and, of course, paying for his son's board, his average cost per animal worked out at a mere R26 per annum (just over R2 per month), which was less than one-seventh of the cost incurred by Mrs. Matomela.

Given that the majority of rural households in Peddie District earned less than R1,500 per month (Ngqushwa IDP 2003: 28-30), it was clear that the households which experienced shortages of labour were prepared to invest a considerable percentage of their cash resources in the maintenance of a herd of cattle. It is likely that the high costs that people like Mrs. Matomela incurred were a temporary phenomenon, which they endured while they tried to find ways of rearranging their household labour to enable a male family member to take over the herding duties. In situations where this was not feasible, they might be faced with having to 'place' their animals in the byre of another homestead, which is not without risks, or with the possibility of relinquishing their cattle altogether.

Cattle-holding and cattleless households in Loverstwist and Hamburg

Hamburg had many more cattle-holding households in total (101) than Loverstwist did (48), but this can be attributed to the fact that Hamburg was a much bigger village, with 245 occupied homesteads at the time of my fieldwork, while Loverstwist had only 134 occupied homesteads. Nevertheless, at least 41% of the homesteads in Hamburg held cattle, while at least 36% of the total homesteads in Loverstwist held cattle.²⁶ The cattle-holders in Hamburg (at 10,4 cattle per household) also fared much better than their mostly poorer counterparts in Loverstwist (at 5,7 cattle per household), a mere 14 kilometres away.²⁷ This was the case even though 37% of the cattle-holding households in Hamburg held six or fewer

²⁶ As noted, the resident businessman who held the biggest herd of cattle in Loverstwist declined to be interviewed or to volunteer any information about his cattle. This herd of around 50 cattle was kept on a farm some distance from the village and not in the village itself. Neither the homestead nor the herd feature in my analysis below (i.e. from this point onwards for Loverstwist, n=47).

²⁷ A small proportion of these cattle were owned by other people who 'placed' their animals in a senior man's byre (see Chapters Six and Seven).

cattle. Moreover, only 11% of the cattle-holding households in Loverstwist held 13 or more animals, while the equivalent proportion for Hamburg was 21%. The fact that herds in Loverstwist were on average nearly half the size of those in Hamburg, suggests that the average household in Loverstwist was poorer than that in Hamburg, although in terms of cattle-holdings the more restricted grazing resources of Loverstwist also played a role.²⁸

My 2001 census of all cattle-holding households in the two villages yielded slightly higher proportions (28% in Loverstwist and 29% in Hamburg) of woman-headed households than the 1999 district-wide sample (21%). Virtually all of these cattle-holding households were headed by widows, although in some cases it was unclear whether the woman in question had been married previously or was an unmarried mother who had returned to her parental home to live there and subsequently inherited the homestead and its possessions (cf. Jones [1996: 47] for how 'perceptions of marital status are susceptible to retrospective review').

What I do in this section is to use the data I collected to briefly explore the hypothesis that cattle-ownership is part of a complex of factors that together constitute an 'inward-turning' orientation on the part of certain households (see Chapter Four). Stated differently, I want to see the extent to which cattle-holding involves households in these two villages in 'local conversations', i.e. intra-village economic exchanges between the members of particular households and between different households.

The 'Constructing Livelihoods' questionnaire survey was administered to a random sample of 30 households in Loverstwist, of which nine (30%) were found to hold cattle. These 30 households represented a 22% sample of the occupied households in the village. It was also administered to a random sample of 60 households in Hamburg, of which 29 turned out to be cattle-holding households (47%). These 60 households represented a 25% sample of the occupied households in Hamburg. I found that 5,2 cattle was the average herd in the Loverstwist 'Livelihoods' sample and 11,8 cattle the average herd in the Hamburg sample.²⁹

²⁸ Also, eight households in Hamburg (compared to one household in Loverstwist) held herds of 24 or more animals. The biggest herd in Hamburg numbered 77 cattle, which pushed up the average holdings per household in Hamburg.

²⁹ Since the census of cattle-holding households revealed that 36% and 41% respectively of the households in Loverstwist and Hamburg held cattle, at mean herd sizes of 5,7 and 10,4 cattle, there was a reasonable correspondence between data from the 'Livelihoods' sample and the census of cattle-holding households.

To summarise the data presented in Table 5.7, it is clear that households that held cattle in both villages had household heads who were on average older (by as much as 11 years older in Hamburg) than the households without cattle. This suggests to me that the tougher economic conditions in recent times had prevented many households from buying into cattle. Cattle-holding households also had larger households in terms of mean total (resident and absent) members, as well as being on average over 30% larger in terms of mean resident household sizes than those households without cattle.

Cattle-holding correlated with more of the males in the household being resident in the village, which showed up in the mean number of resident males. Here the cattle-holding households in both villages had at least twice the number of resident (i.e. village-based) men, suggesting that these households were focussed on the local agrarian/pensions economy. However, the cattle-holding households in both villages also had proportionally greater numbers of members (men and women) who were both absent from the village and employed.

As pointed out in Chapter Four, poorer households in Hamburg relied heavily on 'jobbing' for their livelihood. There is a correlation between this and being without cattle, since as many as 71% of the households without cattle had 'jobbing' as their dominant source of livelihood (DSL). For the remaining three categories (cattle-holders in Hamburg and both categories in Loverstwist), social welfare transfers ('pensions') formed the dominant source of household livelihood. In addition, in Loverstwist, 'jobbing' was the dominant livelihood source for 29% of the households without cattle, while remittances were dominant for 24% of these households.³⁰ One-third of the cattle-holding households in Loverstwist had remittances as their dominant source of livelihood, while the balance of 22% had 'jobbing' as the dominant source of household livelihood.

In contrast, not one of the 60 households in Hamburg had remittances as its dominant source of livelihood. For the cattle-holding households in Hamburg, social welfare transfers ranked as most frequent DSL, with local salaried employment by resident members the dominant source of livelihood for 21% of the households, and 'jobbing'

³⁰ Two of the 21 households (9,5%) relied on 'hand-outs' from other households to survive.

the dominant source of livelihood for 17% other cattle-holding households. The two remaining households (7%) in this category had private pensions as their dominant livelihood source. What these data reveal is that cattle-holding correlates both with (what is currently) better integration of the household into the market economy *and* greater use of agrarian resources (grazing and arable land). The first part is illustrated by the greater reliance firstly on pensions in both villages and secondly on remittances in Loverstwist and on salaries in Hamburg among cattle-holding households for their DSL. The second part is demonstrated by the proportionally greater use of arable land by cattle-holding households. This also stands to reason, as cattle provide much of the draught in both villages.

Households without cattle had 'jobbing' as a far more important part of their overall livelihoods. This is not unexpected, though, as we might associate cattle, in their capacity as a form of savings, with wealthier households (i.e. those who are least reliant on 'jobbing') anyway. Certainly households holding cattle in both villages hosted proportionally more rituals which involved the slaughter of cattle over the two-year period 2000-2001. They also had proportionally higher scores for ownership of 'luxury' items, such as a colour television and a fridge, and although they were by no means secure in respect of their longer-term livelihood prospects, they were far less likely to be among the poorest households in the village. Again, this is self-evident, because cattle-holding served as a fairly effective buffer over the medium term against the serious impoverishment that was experienced by some households in both villages.

**Table 5.7. Differences between households with and without cattle in
Loverstwi (n=30) and Hamburg (n=60)**

Variable	Loverstwi No Cattle	Loverstwi Cattle	Hamburg No Cattle	Hamburg Cattle
No. of households	21	9	31	29
Mean age of H/hold head	54	59	54	65
Mean total H/hold size	6,8	9,3	4,6	6,4
Mean H/hold size resident	4,7	6,2	3,0	4,3
Female-headed H/holds	52%	33%	52%	48%
Mean no. resident males	0,6	2	0,8	1,6
Mean no. absent members	2	3,1	1,6	2,1
Absent members employed	12 (57%)	11 (120%)	17 (55%)	34 (120%)
Most frequent DSL (dominant source of livelihood)	Pension (38%)	Pension (44%)	Jobbing (71%)	Pension (55%)
2nd-most frequent DSL	Jobbing (29%)	Remits (33%)	Pension (26%)	Salary (21%)
3rd-most frequent DSL	Remits (24%)	Jobbing (22%)	Salary (3%)	Jobbing (17%)
Arable field	7 (33%)	5 (55%)	6 (19%)	11 (38%)
Field in use	3 (14%)	4 (44%)	3 (10%)	16 (55%)
No. Slaughter Rituals in 2000 and 2001	3 (14%)	3 (33%)	5 (16%)	8 (28%)
Colour television	2 (10%)	3 (33%)	2 (7%)	12 (41%)
Electric fridge	5 (24%)	3 (33%)	6 (19%)	14 (48%)

Conclusions

The specific 'livelihood' conditions in Peddie District had changed over the past few decades. Because of the development of 'border industries' and other low-paying employment in the region, people were working in more local metropolitan centres and were thus able to travel home far more frequently than during the heyday of long-distance (male) migrancy (De Wet & Holbrook 1997). This meant that some of the inherent risks of cattle production (bovine diseases, drought episodes, shortages of labour, stocktheft and disputes over grazing), although ever-present, could be better anticipated, more speedily acted upon, and ultimately more successfully ameliorated. Indeed, it was the rather less common figure of the comparatively well-paid long-distance migrant worker who came home once or twice a year who was more wary of investing his earnings in cattle, particularly in the earlier years of his career.

Given that grazing and animal health services - however insufficient and inadequate these were - remained free in these areas, it is clear that keeping cattle remained a vital and viable option for a significant number of households. But cattle-holdings could use up valuable household cash resources and divert (some) male labour in the household from potentially more productive livelihood pursuits. However, once the initial expense of investing in them was absorbed, high-value rurally based investments like cattle could be useful for the way in which they tended to focus and hold the attention particularly of town-based male household members. Cattle thus served not only to lock scarce resources in the rural sphere – resources that might otherwise have dissipated rapidly if held as cash or if spent in the urban sphere. They also helped to ensure a flow of more resources to the rural homestead, through contributions towards the purchases of acaricides, the occasional purchase of a heifer or ox, payment of the labour needed for herding and of the costs of hosting ritual slaughter events. In short, to build the (rural) home.

I argue that closer monitoring of the changes in the numbers of cattle, the age and type (esp. cow-ox) of individual herds and in the nature and number of cattle-holding households, which have long remained opaque, can be useful for understanding both the state of livelihoods and poverty at the household level and of the overall performance and well-being of the rural economy.

Although intensive specialisation in cattle-holding and production is the preserve of a minority of households in rural villages, changing cattle-holdings can serve as an index of the negotiation within households regarding strategic livelihood investment options, gender roles and the relative economic clout of individual household members. The decision, for example, whether to pay for a daughter's tertiary education or to send money to a son struggling to find work in Cape Town could provide valuable insights into the politics of intra-household negotiations over value. These decisions rested on questions such as whether the son could be relied upon to remit some of his income if he found work and the length of time he would continue to do this. They also rested on whether the daughter would apply herself to her studies or drop out. If she was successful and graduated, would she try to find employment locally and contribute financially to the home? If yes, should some cattle be sold to pay for her studies or was this too high a risk as she might marry soon and make less and less of a contribution to her parental homestead? These sorts of questions went to the heart of what it meant to maintain a rural *umzi* and precisely what expectations this engendered among and between household members.

As I have suggested in Chapter Four, in order to understand the forces that were pushing for and against a greater concentration of cattle-holding, we must examine the structure and the biographies of differently situated rural households and individuals that are members of these households. Moreover, contextualising people's lifestyle choices means taking a closer look at their personal biographies, their social networks and their broader cultural frames of reference (see Murray 2002). It follows from the above that I regard the decision of whether or not to invest in cattle per se not as some all-or-nothing cultural imperative (despite the sensibilities of my senior male informants), but as a choice that was made and (almost continuously) contested in mostly male-headed, but also widow-headed, rural households.

I suggest that, in terms of understanding currently less predictable and more varied social and demographic changes taking place, the household developmental cycle is less useful than it was 30 years ago. But this is not to deny that many households in Peddie District still passed through a fairly recognisable path of change over time, and that it is along this long-term trajectory of generational change that we need to locate our research subjects (Murray 1981: 89, 2002; Fay & Palmer 2002). Needless

to say, changes over the course of time in the size and structure of households still had a bearing on the balance of intra-household gender and generational power and labour availability. In an effort to move beyond the synchronic data-sets presented and analysed in this chapter, I make use of the biographical approach in the two chapters that follow. The idea is to identify a 'generation' or 'cohort' and to isolate case-studies within these cohorts that capture some of the distinctive features of socially different rural households. This is appropriate as the rural Xhosa-speaking people I studied did in fact have fairly rigid age-based structural forms that were linked to socio-economic entitlements (see Wilson *et al.* 1952). This affords me a way of capturing the effects of historical fluctuations in the wider political economy over the past 50-60 years, using the lived experiences of differently aged individuals as indicative of these changes.

CHAPTER SIX

Farming cattle, cultivating relationships. A biographical approach to cattle husbandry

The specific trajectories of individual's working lives, in circumstances of constantly shifting opportunities and constraints, and against the background of the changing life-cycles of households and extended families, are important to an understanding of patterns of accumulation, dispossession and differentiation (Murray 2000: 139-140).

In the previous chapter, I described who the holders of cattle were and what distinguished them, to the extent that they were in any way distinct, from their fellow villagers. In the first section of this chapter, I focus on the category of household heads aged 65 years and older who headed nearly half the households that held cattle in the Peddie District-wide sample. I ask whether it is surprising that the category of household heads aged 65 years and older should constitute such a high proportion of the cattle-holding households in our sample and whether these households were headed by the 'traditionally inclined' rural patriarchs who remained attached to the complex of cultural values that included holding cattle, in the face of other, possibly more advantageous investment opportunities.

In the second section of the chapter, I refer briefly to the engagement of men who were younger than 65 years of age with cattle. These were men who were not yet old-age pensioners, and thus found themselves in a rather more difficult economic predicament from that experienced by senior men over the past ten years. Because of space constraints, I am unable to pay as much attention to three younger cohorts (53-64 years, 41-52 years and under 41 years of age) of men who headed cattle-holding households in Loverstwest and Hamburg.¹

¹ I have placed the case-studies from what initially constituted a separate chapter on 'Cattle husbandry by younger men' in Appendix Seven of the dissertation.

A cultural ideal encounters some modern-day snags: Senior men and cattle

From the extensive literature on southern African migrancy, we know that it was often the case that the majority of household heads of this senior cohort (65 years and over) who still had rural ties sought to retire from urban-based employment and become more or less permanently resident in a rural village. Once in the village, they generally tried to do two things. Firstly, they sought to at least maintain, and wherever possible to improve, their economic position. This often meant nurturing the herds of cattle (and also goats and sheep) that they had tried to build up over the years of their employed life and perhaps cultivating whatever land they had access to. Secondly, they would try to consolidate their control over the labour of the members of their household and particularly the fruits of this labour. The examples of Sangwane and Matya, both senior men who held cattle, demonstrate this.

The returned migrant: Lisolomzi Sangwane (67 years old), Hamburg

In the 1940-50s, the father of Lisolomzi Sangwane [*Mlambo* clan] had lots of cattle. He was a migrant worker in Port Elizabeth ['P.E.'] and only came home during holidays. Lisolomzi was the one who herded the cattle at that time. As a boy, Lisolomzi went to the mines in *eRhawutini* [Johannesburg] in 1953 for one year. After returning and going to the bush [to be circumcised], he went to work on building sites in Port Elizabeth, until 1974. Then he worked for Shatterprufe [windscreen-makers] until he was pensioned off in 1993, which was when he came back to his home village. When he was in P.E. he would come home to Hamburg at Easter and December. He moved to KwaZakhele from Korsten [both outside Port Elizabeth] in 1958, but he never bought a house in KwaZakhele. His wife and children stayed in Hamburg all the time he worked in P.E. After his divorce from his first wife, he remarried in 1980. Of the children from this second marriage, only their daughter survived. She lived with them. They were all active members of the Gospel Ambassadors of Christ Church.

Lisolomzi's deceased father's cattle were *ekhay'enkhulu* [at their big home]. His mother was still alive when I interviewed him. She was 95 years old, and two of his younger brothers lived at home with her, but in their own houses. Lisolomzi had moved away and started his own herd

by buying cattle. He paid bridewealth with some cattle and more bred in his *kraal* [byre]. He bought cattle mostly from people in the village. While he lived and worked in Port Elizabeth, he entrusted his cattle to the care of his brother Joel, but since returning permanently to the village, he was responsible for these cattle which were at his *umzi*.

He had a small garden. He had already harvested *mealies* [maize] and when I interviewed him he had only potatoes growing in the garden. He received a provident fund pay-out when he retired and was getting an old-age pension. His wife was too young to get a pension and she did not work. He bought groceries on account at Mrs. Mei [the local shop], where he cashed his pension cheque. Lisolomzi did not have a bank account nor any policies. He had 12 cattle and a small number of goats.

The peasant farmer: *Bawo'uMatya* [Mr. Matya], Hamburg village

Zithulele Albert Matya was born in Hamburg in 1918, making him 83 years old when I interviewed him. His father, Velani, was born on the very site on which he lived. *Bawo'uMatya's* clan-name was *Dlamini*. His grandfather, whom his father told him had died in 1906, once had many cattle. He had worked in the goldmines of *eRhawutini*. *Bawo'uMatya's* father went to work in Cape Town in the docks. The family were left to grow up in the village with their mother. She was *MamThembu* from Newtondale in Peddie. *Bawo'uMatya's* father was actively buying cattle then and, as the last-born son, he had inherited *Bawo'uMatya's* grandfather's cattle, as his brothers had predeceased their father. When *Bawo'uMatya's* father died in 1932, he was buried in the graveyard in Hamburg. *Bawo'uMatya's* mother took over his cattle. All these cattle died in the drought.

Bawo'uMatya's elder brother went to work in Port Elizabeth and he [aged 22] joined him in 1940 and worked in a bakery. After three years, *Bawo'uMatya* went to Cape Town, where he also worked in a bakery. He stayed there for only one year. In 1945, he came back to Hamburg and right through to 2001 he never again worked outside Hamburg. Instead he busied himself ploughing and looking after cattle. He claimed that he was left to look after the home after his elder brother went to Port Elizabeth. This brother didn't send money to their mother, he just stayed in Port Elizabeth.

By contrast, while *Bawo 'uMatya* was working away, he sent money home and he bought a single animal on three [different] occasions. He got married in 1948 to a girl from Bell [village]. His wife died after having four children. Two daughters survived, had married and lived in Port Elizabeth. *Bawo 'uMatya* remarried in 1972 and had two sons. One was still alive and resided in East London. *Bawo 'uMatya* also had five children out of marriage, of whom three survived.

His son in East London gave him money, but only once in two years or so, and none of his other children helped him at all.² He was not helped by his brothers or sister earlier in looking after their mother or in cultivating the family land in Hamburg.

Bawo 'uMatya was a member of the Zion Church which met for services on Sundays. *Bawo 'uMatya* told me that he still believed in his ancestors and, in moving his cattle byre, he would make traditional beer and tell them that he had changed the position of his *kraal*.

He claimed to grow sorghum and maize. Other people didn't grow sorghum, he told me, because it was difficult to keep the birds away from the ripening crop. *Bawo 'uMatya* did the ploughing with his own oxen, but he was involved in *isahulo* [sharecropping] with three women who did the weeding for him.³

He claimed that most of his cattle had died in the many droughts that had plagued the area since 1945. After these droughts had broken, he would try to exchange his cattle for young females to rebuild his herd. After the 'drought of 1979-83', he only had three animals left and he had to build up his herd again from there. In 2000, *Bawo 'uMatya* was said to have a herd of 27 cattle, even though he declared just 11 of them during our survey of all the herds in Hamburg.

I argue that it was the longevity and close attention of the household heads like Matya that underwrote the integrity of their herds, albeit with occasional drastic drought-induced losses. They frequently had a relatively high number of fertile cows in their

² For reasons I will not go into here, this son grew up in another homestead and is somewhat ambivalent about his father.

³ Matya previously used his oxen and wagon to collect building shingle [sand and crushed shells] from the beach at Hamburg for sale in the village and neighbouring areas.

herds which allowed them to practically double the size of their herds every other year during good rainfall years, although they experienced problems with calf mortalities. As *intsika yekhaya* [the pillar of the home], they were the primary decision-makers in matters concerning their herds, although they conceded the necessity of consulting spouses, brothers, adult sons and also knowledgeable and trusted friends before making important herd management decisions. There was always a chance that their respective herds would dissipate upon their deaths, but their widows could maintain and build the herd, as long as the contestation over inheritance was minimal. In a situation where the cost of replenishing herds by buying calves (invariably heifers) from outside the reserve areas (for instance, from white farmers) had been relatively high since the late 1970s, inheritance was one mechanism for transferring cattle – and the myriad responsibilities of being *intsika yekhaya* – from the men of one generation to those of the next, via the widow of the deceased household head. Thus inheritance allowed a small group of younger men to establish themselves as holders of cattle.

‘Mystifying’ the relationship between senior men, cattle and the homestead

While the longevity of men who held cattle fed into the ‘mystique’ of the relationship between cattle and people, this was in fact a critical area of disjuncture for many households in the rural sector (cf. Ferguson 1990). The ‘mystique’ played out on two related levels. At the level of the homestead, cattle were seen, in one important and widely acknowledged sense at least, as key signifiers of a successful implementation of the normative project of *ukwakh’umzi* [building the home]. Many of my informants, both men and women, took a very practical line on this, contending that this long-term project rested on the pillars of primarily the long working career, constant social (and ritual) involvement and consistent economic oversight – including marshalling the earnings of his offspring – by the (male) head of the household, in ways that were pleasing to the ancestors of the *umzi*. Commitment to the timely performance of key rituals, which in turn reinforced and ensured the continued goodwill and attentiveness of the ancestors, was a signal part of this project. The reward for this commitment was the protection of the homestead and its members from supernatural harm, which was demonstrated by the material (including bovine) success of the homestead, the health of its members and the longevity of its (male) head.

One ritual that made this link explicit was that of *inkonjane*.⁴ On 26 January 2001, having recently bought two heifers from a white farmer near Wesley, Mr. Mkhaya went to his byre with a clansman (Daliso) and two senior men who were friends of his (Ngqala and Mahlobalo). His purpose was to conduct an *inkonjane* ritual. When I asked him about this later, he told me that this ritual was performed whenever a person bought a new cow/calf. He had to buy a bottle of brandy and tell the whole family (including his ancestors) that he had brought a new animal into the byre. *Ubulele izinyanya zakhe* [he thanks his ancestors] for his good fortune. Some brandy was poured onto the ground in the byre for the ancestors and those men present who drink alcohol would partake of the brandy. Each would be given a tot to drink until the bottle was finished. In this case, most of the men were teetotallers and Mr. Mkhaya returned the bottle to his steel trunk after the ritual. This simple ritual performance, which took only a few minutes to enact, served the very practical purpose of informing the ancestors and senior men in the village about the newly purchased cattle. They were being asked to witness the fact that these heifers had been properly bought and had been marked and placed in the kraal of this *umzi*. On another level, this served as a powerful symbolic means of enhancing solidarity between senior men, by including them in the consolidation of the herd and thus the material success of the *umzi*.

Indeed, the relationship between a homestead and the larger village community, which could be altered radically by changing economic circumstances or by the sometimes unpredictable behaviour of the members of a household, needed constantly to be re-affirmed and re-enacted in practice. Cattle in the byre signified a moral universe that was in balance, albeit one that could be easily disrupted by a wide range of actions or omissions.⁵ It was a universe in which the social position, dignity and relative status of the cattle-holding *umzi* within the larger community had been established and were continually confirmed through both ritual observances and the day-to-day actions of its members (McAllister 2001: 178). *Siphila phantsi komgquba*

⁴ Also known as *ukubingelela*. *Inkonjane* is also the identification markings made by cutting the ear of the animal in a particular way. In earlier times, each clan and lineage had its own way of marking the ears of their cattle (I am grateful to Nokuzola Mgxashe for pointing this out to me).

⁵ 'Cattle look after the family. If there is a problem in the family, especially among women, then you will see people with *intambo* [a necklace around their necks], this is from the *inkomo yekhaya* [the cow of the home]. This will help them...[This] *inkomo yekhaya* is always a cow. It cannot be sold, even in dire circumstances, as to do so, would cause bad luck to the family' (Mr. Macwembe, 85 years old, Hamburg 15 February 2001).

was what several senior men told me. This means literally that ‘we live under manure’.⁶ Men at the head of households that held cattle could generally be relied upon to act reasonably and charitably – if firmly – in the patriarchal mould of *ubudoda*. This was the idealised Xhosa notion of manhood, with its associated complex of normative behaviour (see Moodie with Ndatshe 1994: 38; Moodie 2001).⁷ ‘Living under manure’ also meant that one’s chances of being recognised by other men and women as a responsible, ‘proper’ Xhosa man were greatly increased. By holding cattle, these men had cleared a significant economic and moral hurdle in earning the respect of the community, and had a culturally potent and demonstrable stake in, and a contribution to make to, the affairs of the community.⁸

However, the cultural complex of cattle-senior men-homestead was actively challenged especially by single, younger and better-educated women and more passively by younger men who, in private, poured scorn on rural modes of living, even though their chances of escape through, for instance, securing employment in the city seemed negligible. The complex could also be undermined by the actions of men who were deemed to hold too many cattle or did not play the (cattle-holding) game by the locally sanctioned cultural rules.

Pointed comments, like those of *Bawo ’uMatya*, reinforced the centrality – at least to people in the village – of the ideology of *building the home*. Unlike his apparently recalcitrant elder brother, who Matya claimed left the village to work in Port Elizabeth and then failed to send any remittances to his mother in Hamburg village, Matya himself had been both a hard-working farmer and committed builder of the home. Even during his short period as a migrant, Matya claimed that he sent money home to buy cattle. By his own description at least, Matya had been unswerving in aspiring to the moral injunction of *ukwakh ’umzi* through his constant attention to

⁶ This, it was explained to me, was most graphic in the way manure was placed under the vats of *mqombothi* [traditional beer] as the beer was brewed in preparation for an ancestor veneration ritual.

⁷ ‘A man must have cattle. If he has no cattle then he is not a man. Cattle are his bank. We don’t want to know how much money he has in the bank, we want to see his cattle in the *kraal*. Cattle are there to plough, milk and to slaughter’ (Mr. Macwembe, Hamburg, 15 February 2001). ‘It is *umthetho* [Xhosa custom] that each house should have a *kraal*’ [byre] (Mr. Mafela, Hamburg, 13 June 2001). Mr. Somana told me, with reference to the way a family is judged by the behaviour of the household head, that ‘the dignity of the man equals the respect of the family’ (Hamburg, 5 July 2001).

⁸ ‘In earlier times, men without cattle could not stand up and address a community meeting. We would say, ‘who is this person? Where does he come from?’ M.D. Hintsa, Grahamstown, 7 March 1999.

agrarian production, both arable and livestock, even though this had not been his only source of income over the years. As a result, his strong sense of entitlement to the family site and homestead in Hamburg was, at least in his own mind, unquestionable. Not only this, but Matya had cemented relations with his neighbours by using his herd of cattle to their mutual benefit through their sharecropping relationship.

The same cannot be said for his siblings who had made, he claims, no contribution in either caring for their mother or cultivating the arable land of the *umzi*. Matya's insistence of his own model behaviour in building the home seemed to hint at his anticipation of claims from the offspring of his *amatshipa* [absconder] siblings. These people also had some rights to the homestead and associated arable land of their deceased grandfather and they may seek to press these claims upon Matya's death, which his elderly (second) wife would have to fend off. Matya's own children, who had not fared any better in supporting their homestead, left Matya with no obvious male candidate to whom he might bequeath (via his wife) the homestead and its (bovine) assets. This was a situation that could easily result in contestation among the next generation of the agnatic cluster.

One point emerging from the above is clear. The decision to contribute towards building the home was one that each young adult, particularly if employed, necessarily made. However, because most people found employment far from their rural homes, their decision to build the home was, at least from the perspective of the rural homestead members, easily and worryingly undermined by new-found urban concerns. Because of this tension, employed people's commitment to building the home was constantly subjected to scrutiny and comment by their rural relatives. Their continued commitment needed to be re-enacted in two ways. It needed to be materially demonstrated through such things as regular visits home, the purchasing of groceries for the home and of shoes and clothes for children. It also needed to be culturally re-enacted through participating in networks of support that actively sought employment for rural relatives and unrelated fellow-villagers, and by contributing to the performance of rituals and attendance of funerals in the village. Participation in *imigalelo* [rotating credit clubs] and contributions to *masingcwabane* [burial societies] in one's home village were other ways of demonstrating this commitment.

To opt out of this project was to place oneself on the fringes of the family, socially, economically, ritually and morally. The *amatshipa* [absconders] were those who slink away into the distant townships, who were seldom or never heard from again, and who made no visible contribution to their households or to the village at large. They were regarded as a threat to both the economic and the spiritual well-being of the homestead and, by extension, to the community itself.

This normatively patriarchal value system was rooted in the exogamous patrilineal kinship system of Xhosa-speaking peoples in which many people venerated their agnatic ancestors and where inheritance was based on agnation and the principle of primogeniture. Not surprisingly though, it had been grafted onto the economic realities of the day, where formal employment was predominantly urban-based and resulted in the social fragmentation and economic differentiation of homesteads and villages. Naturally, it was also influenced by the varied religious beliefs (mostly Christian-based with sometimes strong indigenous/ syncretic elements) which people in these villages held. Thus the senior men who held cattle were unanimous on one point. They were the heads of their respective households and the culturally legitimate guardians of the destinies of their households. It was thus not by chance that, mounted on the lounge wall in the home of the devout Christian, Lusiba Sangwane – who told me emphatically that he ‘believes in his bible, not his ancestors’ – there was a white-on-black plaque which was unequivocal in its pronouncement that *Intloko yekhaya nguTata* [lit. Father is the head of the home]. It was these patriarchal values, in which all adults were implicated, that were a significant and consistent site of contestation in households and villages across the district.⁹

While their biographies were intriguingly different, both Sangwane (the returned migrant) and Matya (the long-term peasant farmer and minor entrepreneur) were good examples of the particular dilemma experienced by this senior cohort of men. Their problem was that, even though they controlled a sizeable proportion of the rural cattle herd, their command of the labour of their own household members was often

⁹ My host, *Bawo 'uMkhaya* [Mr. Mkhaya], commented to me that ‘the children of the single women at Ndlovini are the ones stealing our goats and things, because they have no fathers, no *intloko yekhaya* [male head of household].’ Ironically, it is these same respectable men who have many girlfriends and children out of marriage, thereby contributing directly to the ‘problem’ of children with no fathers.

rather limited. Their labour deficits stemmed firstly, from both men having experienced the misfortune of several of their children passing away during their lifetimes. But neither had they accumulated sufficient wealth during their working life to materially support adult children, especially sons or grandsons, whose labour could be wholly harnessed into agrarian production in the rural sector. Consequently, neither man could risk overcapitalising his agrarian-based livelihood, whether cattle or field-based arable production. However, in a low-income but high-risk economic environment, some diversification of one's sources of livelihood must be the economic strategy of choice. On the other hand, neither man had sons or grandsons who were actively positioning themselves, through *ukwakh'umzi* projects, to inherit their cattle. To invest primarily in cattle at this stage of their lives thus made little sense to either Sangwane or Matya.

Ideally, herding should be done by a male household member who had the interests of the *umzi* at heart, but this was not always practically possible. The other day-to-day tasks associated with cattle husbandry were also primarily the concern of the members of each homestead, but could include other members of the agnatic cluster, where household labour was in short supply. A situation where unrelated men had to be employed to herd cattle was least desirable because they had little spiritual, moral or even real economic stake in the survival of the herd. In a typical village situation, the jealousy of poorer people was said to be easily aroused by one's relatively bountiful herd of cattle. This could result in depredations against one's herd, and the medicines employed to protect them might not be as effective as they would be if deployed by a herdsman who was also a kinsman. Matya, who had 27 cattle and lived only with his elderly wife, was in this predicament. An especially fierce old man of whom many younger men seemed genuinely scared, Matya relied on the non-kin members of the ploughing team (to which he loaned animals) to provide him with daily assistance in managing his herd of cattle.

Nor did Sangwane have a resident son, grandson or any other younger patrilineal male relative nearby, other than his brothers, who could assist him with the day-to-day tasks associated with animal husbandry. These brothers had herds of their own and it was uncommon for a senior man who was permanently resident in the village generally to herd his cattle with those of his resident brothers. So Sangwane's

brothers themselves were of little use to him in this regard. He could, however, request that they dispatch one of their sons to herd his cattle. This would be seen in a favourable light by his brothers, particularly as Sangwane had no sons of his own who would inherit his cattle and his brothers might have seen this as an opportunity to assert a posthumous claim to his cattle.

The advanced age profile of the household heads in this cohort does not mean that these cattle-holding households were constituted exclusively of elderly people. On the contrary, with an average household size in the Peddie District-wide sample of 6,6 people, it was clear that these were predominantly multi-generational households. Typically they included a number of younger people, most often skipping a generation to include the grandchildren of the elderly household head. However, with the high rural-urban mobility of many younger people, not all of these people were consistently resident in their respective rural homesteads.

Animal husbandry work was still performed predominantly by the younger generation of boys and young men (usually under 35 years of age). They had an important role to play in driving the cattle out to pasture and to the dip-tank. They would be sent to search for missing cattle. They also provided the labour to effect repairs to the byre and in other matters relating to cattle and small stock (including treating common ailments and also milking, where relevant). The importance of the ideology of *building the homestead* in motivating especially young men to continue contributing their labour in this way was unequivocal.¹⁰

The discussion above has focused on the cultural complex of senior men, cattle-holdership and the normative project of building the homestead, but where did this leave the senior men who did not hold cattle? Mr. Nathi, a resident of Loverstwi, was an example of a senior man who had no cattle.

¹⁰ The situation in the small towns of the Eastern Cape, to which retrenched farm-workers were moving in considerable numbers, was different: here, it was common to see elderly men sitting in the fields and along the road, actively herding their cattle. This speaks eloquently to the fact that they had effectively lost control over the labour of their male offspring.

Mr. Nathi (about 60 years old), without cattle¹¹

Nathi was from Rwantsana farm. From there, he first moved to Hoyi [village] and then to Loverstwist. There were cattle before at his home, but they died when the family arrived at Loverstwist. Even the goats died here. The cattle died because of drought. Nathi was still very interested in owning cattle and goats. He thought that if his daughters got married he would be able to have cattle again [through the payment of *lobolo*], because he still wanted to own cattle again.

Interviewer: Which is better, to have money in a bank account or cattle in your *kraal*?

Nathi: I don't have a bank account and I don't have cattle. The money I get from my pension [a disability grant] is not enough to buy groceries. I don't have cattle because I don't have money. If I can get money, I can buy cattle.

Interviewer: What about stock-theft, sickness and drought? Aren't these things that make people wary of buying cattle?

Nathi: No, [they] are not major problems, as I see it.

Interviewer: It is sometimes said that men without cattle are not respected in these villages. Would you say that's true?

Nathi: It is true. I don't get respect in the village because I don't have cattle, but I do get respect in the church. Xhosa tradition is that you aren't respected if you don't have cattle. Another thing is money. If you have money, people respect you like Jehovah.

Interviewer: Do you plough or cultivate a garden at all?

Nathi: I don't have a field, but I do have a garden, which is not yet ploughed.

Interviewer: Where do you get the manure for your garden and for brewing *mqombothi* [traditional beer]?

Nathi: I will go to my brother if I want manure for the garden, but as I am a religious person I don't make *mqombothi* at all.

Interviewer: Are you really still interested to have cattle in future?

Nathi: If I had the money, I would definitely go out and buy cattle. It is terrible not to have cattle, because cattle in the *kraal* are the bank of the *amaXhosa* and if you don't have cattle you are a poor person. I still hope to buy goats, because these are very good and grow very fast. In

¹¹ Interviewed by Sonwabo Mase, Loverstwist, 11 November 2001.

December times, there are many [ritual] things you can do with goats, and without them, it is very bad...

Given the other demands on their pensions or grants, saving up enough money from these sources of income to buy a heifer was virtually impossible. The reality was that elderly men like Nathi, even though they were in the fortunate position of having a guaranteed reliable income, were unlikely to hold cattle again. That said, the one ace up the sleeve of these elderly men might have been to have any prospective bridewealth paid partly in cattle. This obviously only happened in cases where these older men had young daughters from a second marriage or from having 'adopted' a granddaughter at birth and raised her as their own daughter. Even then, however, labour constraints for herding such *ikhazi* [the cattle from bridewealth] and the expenses associated with a formal wedding, which often went hand in hand with bridewealth payments, might have undermined this scheme.

Cultivating relationships through the exchange and slaughter of cattle

The ways in which people made their cattle work for them in a social and cultural sense needs to be examined in more detail. While there were a number of avenues for effecting the conversion of cattle into social currency in the village, a key one was that of freely sharing meat at particular times with all villagers, as in the case below.

Slaughtering Mr. Mkhaya's cow

My host in Hamburg village, Mr. Mkhaya (77 years old), announced to me one morning that one of his cows was in poor health. Its hindquarters had collapsed and the animal could barely walk, let alone go out to graze. He did not have a ready explanation for its condition, he said, and he (probably mostly as a courtesy) asked my advice. I suggested that I could telephone the district state veterinarian, describe the symptoms to him, and ask his advice. This was agreed.

The vet advised that the animal be put out of its agony. He said that its condition sounded serious, and was probably caused by the growth of internal spinal abscesses that developed as the result of numerous tickbites over years. These abscesses would eventually have cut off the

nerve connections in the animal's lower spine, a painful and debilitating condition that was irreversible.

Having already lived with the family for six months and quizzed them at some length about their five cattle, I was surprised when Mr. Mkhaya's adult son, Mazizi, and I were dispatched to speak to Mrs. Mawe, a widow and pensioner who lived on the other side of the village. Mrs. Mawe's unmarried daughter was the recently elected mayor of Ngqushwa [Peddie District] at this time and it had become clear to me that old Mrs. Mawe was a force to be reckoned with in the village. We were to inform her about the fate of the animal and that Mr. Mkhaya wished to slaughter it. When I queried this, I was told that she was the real owner of this animal which had been left in Mr. Mkhaya's care. For reasons not made explicit, Mr. Mkhaya said that he would allow Mrs. Mawe to choose another of his cows to replace this one. Mrs. Mawe in turn asked that Mazizi telephone her teacher son, who lived in Gcinisa village [some 20 kms from Hamburg by road]. Mazizi was to tell him about the cow. This son was duly informed and agreed to the proposed course of action.

By 9h30, the word had gone out and there were 14 young men assembled in Mr. Mkhaya's yard, eager to slaughter the cow and to begin cooking the meat over fires of hastily collected brushwood. Mr. Daliso, a clansman and fictive son of Mr. Mkhaya, oversaw the proceedings. Because this was not a ritual slaughtering, the animal was not slaughtered in the byre but alongside it. No women were to be seen. Experienced hands thrust a long but apparently blunt knifeblade into the terrified beast's neck, just behind the head, and severed the spinal cord. The blood that gushed out of the wound was saved in a basin to be cooked and consumed later. When the animal continued thrashing about, one of the men suggested slitting its throat as well.

Several young men quickly skinned the carcass and the meat was cursorily examined. They discovered that the back of the animal was actually broken in two places. A few knifestrokes later and much noxious green fluid flowed out of the spinal cord itself. The senior men casually looked over the animal and, after some conversation, decided

that these fractures probably occurred at the dip-tank. Their conjecture was that a heavier animal probably landed on top of the still-submerged cow and in doing so, fractured its back. With this detail taken care of, the animal was deemed fit to eat, the carcass was cut up and some of the meat *braaied* [roasted] on the open fire and the rest set to boil in big pots.

Within a matter of minutes, eating commenced. I was invited to sit with the few older men who, having been informed of the slaughter, had assembled in Mr. Mkhaya's yard. Younger men brought us some choice pieces of meat, including the liver. With one or two exceptions that were quickly remarked upon, all the men present observed the age-ranking system with regard to seating arrangements, even on this informal occasion. This meant that, in constant succession, the youngest man of those seated with the senior men would give up his seat to a newly arrived more senior man. Mr. Mkhaya, who had been busy inside his house with patients [he is an *ixhwele* or herbalist], joined us in the sun and pocket-knives were produced to cut off strips of meat to assist worn teeth. Mr. Mkhaya joked that 'the whole village will be here later, [both] men and women, when they see the smoke...'

Later, a few sizeable pieces of meat were taken down to the local highschool by Mr. Daliso to be given as a courtesy to the teachers. Still later, when several teachers arrived to partake in the meat at the Mkhaya homestead, there was some speculation by Messrs. Mkhaya and Daliso as to whether the school principal had actually shared the meat provided with the other teachers or simply took all of it for herself....

In acting out this role of benefactor, Mr. Mkhaya was doing exactly what the community expected of a senior man in his (relatively wealthy) position. 'His' animal, which was worth about R2,000 at the time, was in terminally poor health. He was doing the normative thing of slaughtering it and sharing the meat with everyone in the village, including his patients who were not local residents, but who had travelled from elsewhere to consult him about their ailments. I estimated that about 40 people, many of them among the neediest in the village, ate as much as they could consume of the meat on offer, and this number was similar in other instances. More men than women attended on this occasion, but this was not always the case. A few

large cuts of the meat were carried into the kitchen of the Mkhaya residence, where the meat would be prepared on the stove for the family's (and visitors') consumption and some was refrigerated to be cooked and eaten later.

Mr. Mkhaya lost interest in the proceedings soon after the initial consumption of meat and went back indoors. No-one thanked him formally or informally for providing the meat, nor was anyone obliged to do so. Some men commented on the tenderness of the meat, but this seemed to be more a way of lubricating the conversation, leading as it did to comparisons with other types or ages of cattle and the toughness of the meat at other such occasions. When I remarked towards the end of the day that he had been generous 'in feeding the people', Mr. Mkhaya agreed easily but indicated that rather than being an act of individual generosity, this display of *ubudoda* was what was expected of men with cattle. His next comment was equally instructive. This sort of behaviour, he said, was not like that of

some people...like Radebe the teacher who, when they see an animal [of theirs] is ill, they quickly slaughter it and sell the meat to the people in the village...people come to buy this meat and eat it without any knowledge of the reason for its illness.

The concern expressed here was twofold. Mr. Mkhaya was concerned about the anti-social nature of one of the wealthiest men in the village selling meat (i.e. specifically beef, since pork and chickens are regularly sold) in the village. He was also concerned about the failure to discuss the matter with other senior men so as to inform them of one's predicament, to get their opinions for making an informed diagnosis of the animal's condition and to put forward one's proposed solution to the problem. Indeed, when I later asked the 38-year old policeman, Mandla Gushana, upon discovering that his sick animal, which was worth by his estimate about R800, 'only had brown liquid on its brain', why he did not opt to sell the apparently uncontaminated meat to local people or meat-buyers from Mdantsane, he was visibly taken aback. 'It is not possible to sell a sick animal,' he told me. He then spelled out that he could not contemplate the sale of meat from a sick animal to his neighbours and fellow villagers and that he was certain that the meat-buyers from Mdantsane would not be interested in buying a sick animal. He had no problem selling an animal for slaughter to a neighbour, nor with selling a fertile animal, if he had a cash

shortfall in an emergency, but selling a sick animal, and a calf at that, was unthinkable.

Although some of the other younger men, wealthy in cattle, were not playing the game entirely by these rules, senior men could be relied upon to follow the pattern described above. As a result, the cattle of these senior men were watched keenly by all men and boys in the village (some would say too keenly). Any indication of bovine ill-health was monitored very closely for a sign that an opportunity to help slaughter the animal and to eat the meat was at hand.¹² For their part, the mostly younger men with large herds who were regarded by poorer villagers as ‘proud’ and ‘stingy’ were chided whenever an occasion arose to do so, for not sharing their wealth in cattle by the local cultural norms that applied to *amadoda anenkomo* [men with cattle].

Effecting ties that bind

Another social dimension of successful cattle husbandry involved the ways in which animals were loaned out and exchanged with other families. I was consistently told by informants that the ‘traditional’ practice of *ukunqoma* [the ‘loaning out’ of cattle by large herd-holders to build up patron-client relationships and to minimise risk] had ‘died with our grandfathers’, i.e. was not practised these days (see Kepe 2002b). However, I slowly uncovered evidence to show that the practice had effectively been inverted. Instead of the holders of large herds¹³ loaning out some of their cattle to

¹² The frequent references in my fieldnotes indicate how common this was, particularly during winter. On 4 May 2001, the Nyongo family have slaughtered a cow because of its advanced age and people have turned out to eat it. On 8 May 2001, a young ox at the Gushana homestead is suspected of having contracted *inyongo* [gallsickness] and is to be slaughtered. I asked who would alert the household head, Mr. Zilindile Gushana, as he has a painting job in Maqubeni (the formerly ‘white’ residential area of Hamburg), so that he could set the knives to work. Returning later the same day from another interview, I found the animal slaughtered with the consent, not of Mr. Gushana, but by his deceased brother’s second eldest son, Mandla Gushana, who, I was informed, was the actual owner of the ox. On 9 May 2001, Galelekile Masi says that Mzukisi Mthoba slaughtered an old cow on Tuesday at Qolweni that was sick. Someone reported that John Tozi has a sick Brahman ox. It is said to be coughing – a sign of TB – but Thumelekile Goje says he saw it in the veld and it looked better now. He says, however, that one of Ndindwa’s animals has been sick for the past few days and is being watched closely. It is duly slaughtered on 11 May 2001. On 12 June 2001, eleven men assembled at Mpahlaza’s place to slaughter and eat a sick calf while on 30 June 2001, a crowd assembled to eat the calf that had died at Mr. Macwembe’s place the day before.

¹³ Based on the observations of informants, I take a large herd to consist of 12 or more cattle, although my informants generally spoke of a man with 20 cattle as *umntu onemfuyo eninzi* [a person with many cattle].

destitute families, it was the families with few cattle who requested that successful cattle-holders include their few animals into these larger herds.

The intention and indeed the effect was the same as before, at least from the perspective of the holders of small herds. Their aim was to establish and cement social ties of trust and patronage. Crucially, they also got around the problem of insufficient household labour resources for herding in their own households and thereby saved on the costs of having to hire labour to herd and husband their cattle. There was, moreover, the possibility of benefiting from this person's superior animal husbandry knowledge, with explicit reference sometimes made to his supernatural prowess with cattle, and his superior resources with respect to dipping, inoculating and treating sick animals, that could mean the difference between a poorer family's animals surviving an untimely disease or succumbing to it.

Widows heading households that held cattle appeared to be most likely to resort to this practice of 'placing' their animals. This was often simply because they did not have sufficient control over the labour of a son or young male relative who could do the 'men's work' of herding and managing their animals.¹⁴ In these circumstances, they sought ideally to place their animals with a male relative, usually a brother or a male consanguine, or trustworthy friend or neighbour who was a successful herdsman.

This option might also have been more attractive to widows who feared that their deceased husband's kin would lay claim to the cattle that they inherited upon their husband's death. In other ways too, widows could find themselves in structurally vulnerable positions, especially given the reality that most witchcraft accusations were directed against single and elderly women (cf. Englund 2002; Niehaus 1997). It was thus a prudent strategy for vulnerable women to ally themselves with influential senior men (and women) in the village. One way, although by no means the only way, of doing this was by placing some or all of their cattle with senior men in order to cultivate a relationship with them that may have helped to shield them from such odious accusations.

¹⁴ I found only one example in the two villages (with a combined total of 149 cattle-holding households) where a (young) woman was the regular herder of the homestead's cattle.

Becoming active members of local societies and church groups, as well as helping with the preparations at other people's rituals, were other strategies that vulnerable women adopted. The animals thus loaned were frequently included, for reasons of practicality, in the herd register of the recipient, thereby contributing to an apparent increase in the number of cattle held by these men. This practice played havoc with the dipping foreman's often casual attempts to record cattle numbers accurately. Consider the case of the cattle in Mrs. Mapela's byre.

The case of Nontembeko Mapela (65 years old)

Mrs. Mapela was a widow and an old-age pensioner. She had two cattle that were loaned out. One was an ox on loan to her brother in Hamburg village. She said that the animal was left at his home at a time when she had no-one to look after it, as her [grand]children were too young.

Another ox was on loan to her sister's husband on Mthana farm, adjacent to Hamburg. Mrs. Mapela said that the grazing was better in this area, so the animal would grow faster there. Whilst these two were her own cattle, there were a further eight animals in her byre held by her son, Mzukisi Mapela (33 years old), who worked in Port Elizabeth. He inherited these eight cattle from his deceased uncle, Mthobeli Ntenge.

The cattle at this homestead were cared for by Lunga Mapela, a 17-year-old youth, who was the grandson of Mrs. Mapela.

The lack of labour for herding also constrained some households that were headed by men. Zamani Matshoba, who worked in East London and thus lived outside the village for much of the time, arranged for his self-employed neighbour in Hamburg, Zwelidumile Bacingwa, to look after his 12 cattle in his absence. In another case, the pensioner Thandumzi Nxamani, who lived in Loverstwest with his wife and two sons, held eight cattle, and looked after the seven cattle of his absent neighbour, Vuyisile Peter.

A less visible and clearly less socially palatable variation on the theme of 'placing' one's cattle was the notion of cattle being given as surety against loans provided to needy individuals. The biggest cattle-holder in Hamburg, Khayaletu Mapayi, used to be a money-lender in the village. There were cattle in his herd that had been 'placed'

there by other people, especially widows. At times it proved difficult to unearth the specific reasons that individuals had for placing all or some of their cattle with the holders of larger herds, especially when they clearly had sufficient labour (at the time of my enquiry anyway) to herd their cattle. None of the people I interviewed volunteered that their animal was in someone else's byre as surety for a loan, but some of the responses to this line of probing were ambivalent or vague, suggesting that something of this nature might in fact be the case. To be sure, there was an almost constant movement of work-seeking men, especially young men, between the village and the cities of East London and Port Elizabeth. What this means was that people who held cattle continually had to adjust their strategies to best exploit the male labour available to them to ensure that their cattle were not neglected.

Exchanges of cattle

Selling cattle, particularly to white buyers in the morally negative space that was the extra-village stock sale situation, was widely regarded as a socially undesirable economic necessity. It was particularly undesirable for the way it publicly exposed the acute need of households forced to engage in a 'distress' sale to the white outsiders. It was also undesirable because the sale (rather than exchange) of any animal to white buyers was seen as detracting from the project of building the homestead, which was epitomised by an increase in cattle numbers. By extension, selling an animal at the stocksale also deprived the community of their rights to this animal. In contrast, selling to other members of the village community was less problematic because, as McAllister (2001: 180) points out, 'people are implicated in the building of every homestead' in the village. This included selling or exchanging animals with other homesteads, so that their material or spiritual well-being may be improved.

Where cattle were sold in the village, the holders of cattle couched their need to sell in the idiom of a charitable act, as an instance of *masincedisane* [let us help each other]. This meant they spoke of the sale as an example of their helping the person or family in question so that they might conduct their funeral or ancestor ritual successfully. Where the seller was not desperate for cash, he or she might try to negotiate an exchange of cattle, rather than take 'slippery' cash for the desired animal.

Direct exchanges of cattle were only possible, of course, between cattle-holding households and these circuits thus excluded the households that were without cattle.

Such exchanges – and sales – of cattle amongst households in the village were yet another way in which people tried to cultivate and cement relationships. In fact, the buying and selling of cattle were probably the most significant (in cash terms) economic activity carried on between households in rural Peddie District.¹⁵ These exchanges happened fairly regularly, as both people with and those without cattle seek out cattle, held by other households, that were deemed suitable for building their herd or for slaughter at their funerals and ancestor-veneration rituals.

Invariably, the terms of any exchange of animals between villagers, which usually involved payment in cash for an animal, corresponded more with the nature, history and closeness of the relationship between the two parties and with their reading of their positions of relative need than with the optimum cash price that could be achieved were the animal to be sold at the stocksale. These sorts of calculations are not unusual, because exchange everywhere, Ferguson (1992: 56) has noted, is culturally constituted and ‘hedged in’ by particular moral, legal and cultural principles. In this, the exchange of cattle between households in rural Peddie was no different. Every exchange was a social encounter in which all the nuanced implicit meanings and markers of social relationships, including ties of kinship, clanship or neighbourhood, estimations of social difference and distance, as well as calculations regarding expectations of reciprocity and estimations of generalised demand and relative neediness, were considered prior to and during the transaction itself.

The movement of cattle through sale and exchange around the village and between villages can provide valuable clues to the topography of social relationships and economic differences between homesteads, as rural people struggled to secure their livelihoods and to build their homesteads. Without doubt, exchanging cattle was all about realising value, but this value was not measured merely by the cash-equivalent value of the animal(s) in question. Rather, each exchange presented households with cattle with an opportunity to enhance or dent their social standing, by displaying

¹⁵ Probably matched only by the payment for the annual ploughing of arable lands by oxen or by tractor.

generosity and fair play or by driving a hard bargain and running the risk of being accused of stinginess. Their choices over time would become well-known to other people and would affect their social network and influence in the village and the local area.

Was Nolakhi re-affirming her alliances by exchanging cattle?

Nolakhi Melwane, a member of the *Radebe* clan, was 62 years old. She was a widow and an old-age pensioner. She was also an *igqira* [traditional healer] and acknowledged as a powerful and well-connected woman in Hamburg village. Nolakhi was recently involved in two exchanges of cattle with senior men in the village, namely Mzwanele Mahlobalo and Mthozamile Raduma (both *Radebe* clan). The latter was the holder of the second biggest herd in Hamburg.

In both instances, she exchanged an ox for a cow. The exchanges were probably on terms unfavourable to her, since people usually reckon an ox to be worth more than a cow, but as her stated reason for these exchanges was that she wanted to have more cattle, the cows were likely to have fully or nearly fully functional udders – a rarity in this tick-infested area in which tick-damage to udders was common – and were thus worth more than usual to local people.

When I came to hear of these exchanges, the cow exchanged with Mahlobalo had already calved at Nolakhi's homestead. She had not yet collected the cow from Raduma's *kraal* and seemed likely to leave it there, perhaps until it was pregnant. The cattle were cared for by her son, Ace (35 years old), a one-time municipal councillor but who was then unemployed, and by two younger grandsons who lived with Nolakhi.

Why was this particular case of interest? All around the village, there was evidence of people's herds flourishing with the good rains in recent years and the ample grazing available as a result of these rains. Oxen in particular were generally a strategic resource in the village environment, because they were sought after for use in ploughing and they served as high-value goods which could be sold at the stocksale in cases of acute need. Moreover, they were used for important ritual slaughter,

associated with the death of household heads. Unlike cows or bulls, they did not, however, actively build one's herd. Nolakhi had decided that she wanted to benefit from the current favourable climatic conditions by building her herd and exchanged her remaining oxen for cows.

Having acknowledged that it makes economic sense during a high rainfall cycle to buy cows and build one's herd, what social explanation can be put forward for the way she went about doing so? Why did Nolakhi choose this moment to exchange her oxen and why with these particular two men? In the first instance, both men were clansmen of hers and both were amenable to an exchange of animals with her. Part of the explanation, I think, must also lie with the fact that Nolakhi's son, Ace, was recently accused of raping a retarded minor and, while the court case was pending, he had been reduced to idling at home, out of the public eye, but still very much in the village.

I think that Nolakhi spent time negotiating the exchange of cattle with these two influential clansmen in an attempt to smooth some of the ruffled feathers in the community, where frustration at the behaviour of wayward young men like her son had reached boiling point. It also seemed very likely that she decided that Ace literally needed 'something to do', particularly since he was now dependent on her old-age pension for his livelihood. Herding cattle, although not something that Ace himself would have relished, would contribute towards rehabilitating his shattered reputation in the community. His belated assumption of an activity so strongly associated with the precepts of *ubudoda* [manhood] would send a powerful signal to the *abantu abakhulu* [big people] in the village that his social rehabilitation was underway. Furthermore, Nolakhi's plan was likely to keep him from idling away at the *shebeen* [drinking house] where, in his present state, he was likely to work up a sizeable debt that she would be regarded as the guarantor of. Lastly, she was ensuring that he contributed in a visible and culturally potent way to (re)building the homestead, both materially, by supplying the labour needed to husband their new herd, and socially, by rebuilding their bridges with other homesteads in the village.¹⁶ Whether Ace would buy into his mother's plans remained to be seen. If he chose not

¹⁶ Using her oxen to form a ploughing team might have been another strategy. This would have required Ace to be adept at ploughing, which was not the case.

to, his dim hopes of reclaiming his political and social position in the Hamburg community were probably doomed.

Changes in the rural economy: Cattle husbandry by younger men

It emerged from my detailed interviews with younger men (i.e. in the various roughly 11-year cohorts of less than 64 years of age) that the observable socio-economic differentiation in the village could be linked to the varied life (especially employment) experiences and the different cultural politics of successive 'generations' of individual adult men and women. It emerged, for example, that while some men had quite consciously stuck to one or two jobs through their working lives, other men had moved between jobs with greater frequency. Their more intermittent periods of work were punctuated by what were often longer periods of unemployment.

These differences in individual employment histories could, in many instances, be correlated with their differentiated accumulation of material possessions and associated social prestige, of owning what I call their visible projects of *homestead consolidation*.¹⁷ Of course, several other factors such as educational levels, a spouse's employment history and the relative success of adult children in securing employment, as well as a measure of good fortune and the extent to which individuals were able to grasp and capitalise on such good fortune, also had a significant bearing on these projects of consolidation.¹⁸

Many of the men I interviewed were carefully marshalling their bovine assets in an attempt to increase their herd and thus strengthen their financial position, while also keeping an ear out for local piece-work or urban-based employment opportunities. Building their herds was subject to social pressures, as well as domestic demands for

¹⁷ Measures that were used by villagers to gauge the relative material (and thus social and ritual) success of these projects tended to focus on visible, static investments such as those in brick-and-mortar homes comprised of a number of extensions and separate outbuildings, and the ownership of motorcars and tractors. Investments in the education of one's children and in cattle (and small stock) ownership were further important measures. Regular evidence of conspicuous consumption, especially by way of the adequate provision and consumption of food and liquor for all who attended a homestead's rituals, was another important index.

¹⁸ As Sharp (1994: 77) points out, creating and maintaining stability or a secure base within the rural housestead, tended to generate larger flows of remitted wage income from migrant workers who chose to remain attached to such households, thereby compounding their opportunities for successful accumulation.

food and clothing. Men in this category needed to develop the skills to manage the complicated and contradictory livelihood projects of fulfilling their *masincedisane* obligations as men with cattle and of staving off the demands on their herds originating from relatives and fellow-villagers. Given the dominant patriarchal social ethic, cattle were important instruments of associational village life, helping to build and sustain relationships between people and households, both within the village and between villages and, more crucially, with those who were away in the cities. Although virtually all men benefited from the patriarchal dividend, it was the big herd-owners (who were often in their early 50s), who tended to act as the sturdy patriarchal bulwark against various pressures for social (and agrarian) change.¹⁹

By contrast, poverty-stricken men, who often lived alone or in socially marginal households, were frequently alcoholic and were social failures in several senses. They failed to live up to the Xhosa ideal of a man's role, as husband and father, being that of *intsika yekhaya* [the pillar of the home]. These were the men whom many women in the village referred to as 'useless' and with whom most women (even kin) tried to minimise their social interaction. Because of their poor social standing, these men undermined the dominant patriarchal order in rural villages across Peddie District, which rested on constructions of men as breadwinners and providers in their households and as the arbiters of moral authority in the home and the community. These men were evidence of the failure of this dominant masculinity to adjust adequately to structural changes in the economy. Their predicament also put serious strain on the *masincedisane* [let us help each other] norm, because they could not be relied upon to pass on whatever help they received from other households to their dependents or other struggling kin. Moreover, they were unlikely to ever be in a position to reciprocate the material assistance provided to them.

Men of 40 years of age and younger, trading on the culturally enclaved status of cattle, were not averse to investing some of their resources in cattle. Many of them had only temporary jobs and resolved to convert some of their 'slippery' cash into 'hard' cattle. This served to protect their resources from the relatively expensive hard-living

¹⁹ Their age category was probably related to the fact that many of them appeared to have commenced their serious accumulate cattle in the 15 or so years since the 1982-84 drought. The 'patriarchal dividend' is a concept coined by Connell (1995: 79) to describe 'the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination on women.'

lifestyle that they and their unemployed friends sought to maintain in the village. This lifestyle included feeding off each other's incomes derived from 'jobbing' for the purposes of visiting *shebeens*, travelling around locally or to town, buying gifts for girlfriends and so on. They found that buying cattle provided them with a culturally resonant foil which legitimated tying up some of their disposable cash in the *umzi* byre, where it was safe from predation by friends in need of cash or the demands of their girlfriends and the mothers of their children.²⁰

For young men who still lived at home, a similar pattern emerged. Many young men had responsibilities towards the (often several) children they had fathered with girlfriends in the village or neighbouring area. As long as a young man was unemployed, even the courts, to which young women resorted to force and enforce the payment of child maintenance, were powerless to act against him. As soon as a man found work and began to earn a wage, these demands on his cash wages could be almost overwhelming. Having built up considerable debts with siblings and friends, not to mention outstanding 'credits' at *shebeens* and *izirhoxo* [small shops selling household goods], these men were also likely to be accosted by the mothers of their children, eager to press their entitlements to some of the young man's newly earned wages. Diverting some of their earnings into the purchase of cattle, that were then placed in the relative security of the family byre, could be an effective strategy for avoiding some of these onerous demands, while at the same time winning kudos from their parents, siblings, extended families and other people in the village for their contribution to *building the home*. It is worth emphasising, however, that my case-studies point to the fact that purchasing cattle for the homestead byre was most attractive to the first-born (or eldest surviving) sons and much less so to other sons, who recognised that they might struggle later, once their parents were deceased, to retrieve the cattle they had contributed to the parental byre.

²⁰ During fieldwork, it transpired that buying cattle also helped these young men to launder the relatively large sums of money they earned from illegal abalone harvesting into the village economy.

Conclusions

I have provided ethnographic material in this chapter to show that cattle constituted a culturally potent and economically significant mechanism for accumulation and upward mobility, at least for a considerable proportion of the male section of the rural population. In focussing on the senior cohort of cattle-holding household heads, I found *ukwakh'umzi* [to build the homestead] to be an important cultural script that informs many of their social, economic and ritual investments in their rural homes. I argued that this was undoubtedly partly an artefact of the considerable urban-rural straddling in which most households of necessity continued to engage.

In seeking answers to the question, 'why do people invest specifically in cattle?', I found that cattle retained and even increased their cash-equivalent value well. In this sense, they were valuable assets in an otherwise asset-poor environment. At the same time, and unlike money in the bank, they were also socially embedded in the relationships between people in the rural villages of Peddie District, helping to smooth over glaring differentials in wealth between households. In a variety of ways, cattle were made to work for people, and especially men, to help build their *imizi* and their social networks and to cement their standing in the moral economy of the village. In Gudeman's (2001) terms, cattle helped to build the base.

At the same time, cattle allowed men without cattle to gain a modest but legitimate and, importantly, a masculine livelihood in working for and interacting with men and women in the households that held cattle. Because cattle were considered to be a special category of thing, every person in the village had a stake in all the cattle, even though the cattle were held by a minority of households. But the special status of cattle needed constant reinforcement and policing. Where some cattle-holding households deviated from the cultural script, the overall 'mystique' associated with cattle-holding showed signs of strain and the values of 'community' were undermined.

As pointed out in Chapter Four, possibly the most significant event in the first post-apartheid decade, at least in respect of the economy of the former bantustan areas, was the *coincidence* of an increase in the value of social welfare transfers with a

marked decrease in employment opportunities for middle-aged and young men. More and more elderly and disabled people were able to secure access to pensions and grants (and latterly young mothers to child-support grants) since April 1994 in what effectively became government's main mechanism for wealth redistribution (Sagner 2000). But securing an old-age pension upon reaching the requisite age did not resolve rural people's livelihood dilemmas. The pension represented a cash income that was easily dissipated by the constant stream of material needs within each extended household. Indeed, research in Peddie District showed that the households in receipt of pensions tended to have more resident members who were dependent or who made demands on this source of livelihood. In this situation, tying up part of the wealth of one's household in cattle, which enjoyed the status of a special category of good, could be an attractive strategy to beleaguered household heads while they tried to secure entitlements to alternative cash incomes.

This chapter suggests that, as long as a sizeable proportion of senior household heads continued to hold sufficient cattle that could underwrite the conduct of rituals and lubricate social relations in the village, cattle would form a significant part of the rural economy. Indeed, it was increasingly those in the younger age cohorts who headed their own households who appeared to be interested in cattle. At one level, the approach of younger men to cattle was similarly informed by patriarchal notions of *ubudoda* [manhood], *ukwakh'umzi* [building the home] and *masincedisane* [let us help each other]. At another level, there was some evidence of a creeping commercialisation in the way these younger generations of men held and managed their herds which posed a challenge to the dominant patriarchal livelihood and social projects of rural households. In the next chapter, I turn to examine some of the gender and generational struggles for the homestead in rural Peddie District in which cattle were implicated.

CHAPTER SEVEN

‘Amadoda ahamb’emva’. Gender and generational struggles for the homestead in Peddie District¹

The politics of commodities are always twofold: interested categories of people enter into contestation not only over who will have the goods, but equally over how the terrain of goods itself will be structured. And this contestation is not only political, but simultaneously moral, legal, and cultural (Ferguson 1992: 70).

Introduction

In an important collection of essays, Hodgson and others set out to deconstruct the ‘enduring myth of the patriarchal African pastoralist’ (Hodgson [ed.] 2000). Hodgson (2000a: 4) argues that as the attention of anthropologists has shifted to more processual, historically informed and actor-oriented approaches, so their work has increasingly revealed both ‘the complexities and contradictions that organize social relations’ and the ‘heterogeneity, fluidity and dynamism of the social relations themselves.’

Hodgson is especially critical of earlier (male) ethnographers of African pastoral societies for their too-easy acceptance of the ‘male point of view’ as reality, rather than as ideology, which led them to repeat and thereby reinforce these ‘androcentric ideologies’ in their scholarship (Hodgson 2000a: 3-5; see Layton 1997: 187-190). Where Hodgson is undoubtedly correct is in her insistence that ‘pastoral life, and therefore pastoralist gender² relations, is about more than just livestock production’ and that ethnographers would do well to consider the full house of historically

¹ Literally, ‘men are walking at the back or behind [these days].’ It was a common practice for Xhosa men to stride out ahead of their wives, rather than to walk alongside them. The quotation refers to the way in which women were taking the lead in the home and the village. In my analysis here, I am mindful of Jones’ (1996: 102) critique of the ‘male marginalisation’ thesis which purports to explain the marginality of black men within the family in terms of their structural marginality of society as a whole (see Sansom 1974: 171). Jones argues that this denies the agency of black women, by appending them to men’s experiences and structural position, and thereby undervaluing the agency, resilience and creativity of these women in dealing with considerable adversity (cf. Van der Vliet 1991).

² I adopt Hodgson’s (2000a: 5) definition of gender to mean the ‘mutually constitutive symbolic and material relations of power between and among men and women. Gender roles and relations are dynamic, historical and produced through the actions and ideas of men and women, in interaction with local and translocal processes and structures’. Though as MacDonald *et al.* 1997 (quoted in Chant & Gutmann 2000: 4) note, ‘...in the world as it is at present, gender relations are a hierarchy with men at the top.’

situated meanings, perspectives and relationships between men and women (Hodgson 2000a: 4-5). In an approach similar to the one I have taken throughout this dissertation, Hodgson (2000a: 9-10) suggests that

The stereotype of the patriarchal family (male head of household with wife and dependent children) is in fact only one stage in the developmental cycle of family growth and decline...As members of the household move through their life-cycles, it is inevitable that the gendered relations of power within the domestic unit shift accordingly...Such cyclical transformations are further complicated by broader historical changes in the political economy which can disrupt household production and reproduction, increase and even institutionalise social stratification, dismantle household security networks, and restructure generational relationships of dependence and independence.

Irrespective of the gender of the ethnographer, however, it was extremely rare (but not entirely unheard of) to see women engaged in driving cattle, dipping or spraying cattle or in ploughing in rural village contexts throughout the Eastern Cape during my period of fieldwork. The near-absence of women from the sphere of cattle was a cultural artefact which was consistently applied in the villages of Peddie District (Steyn 1988; cf. Potts 2000: 817).³ Women were infrequent sellers at the local stocksales and only widows and those who headed their own households who had inherited cattle actually attended stocksales (and then rarely) in order to sell an animal.

Moreover, since married women were not supposed to cross the courtyard nor enter the byre of their married home, nor that of any household other than the households of her grandfather, father or her brothers, it was rare for women to milk cows and unheard-of that they would participate in the actual slaughter of cattle (Mtuze 2004). Even the female meat-sellers who visited the villages from East London in order to buy animals were no exception. These women paid men to slaughter the animals they

³ I do not pursue the interesting question of the extent to which this exclusion was also a political and economic artefact, which had been enforced more strictly (by senior men) since the mid-1970s when the men who were retrenched from town-based jobs were pushed back into their home villages (compared to the 50-60 years prior to that when male labour for animal husbandry was in short supply). However, as I hinted earlier, it is fair to accord some role in this regard to the colonial, apartheid and bantustan states in 'overlying systematic racial discrimination with gender-based discrimination' (Walker 1990b; Bryceson & Bank 2001: 7). To take one example, the Home Improvements section of the Ciskeian Department of Agriculture and Forestry, employed only women – 17 of them in 1984 – to provide 'agricultural' extension services to women in 'feminine' matters relating to personal hygiene, food preparation and preservation, vegetable gardens, clothes-making, poultry and home industries (De Beer 1986: 182,192; Mager 1999).

bought in the village, to carve up the meat and bundle it into their vehicles before they drove it away and sold it at the taxi-rank in town.

But while women in rural Peddie District played an insignificant role in daily tasks relating to cattle-holding, husbandry and exchange, this does not mean that they were not involved in the politics of cattle-holding. This, of course, is Hodgson's point and, indeed, all adult women participated keenly in the day-to-day financial goings-on of their respective households. They also actively contested the nature and necessity of expenditure and consumption and the struggles over the apportionment of labour, scarce cash and other material resources in meeting the livelihood needs of the household. In the households that held cattle or wished to hold cattle, older and younger women were known to apply pressure on husbands, fathers, sons and other male relatives to use the cattle of the *umzi* to serve particular consumption interests and projects of accumulation (as with the *umzi* of Gcinikhaya Mkhaya in Chapter Four).

Such contestation does not imply that married women (or other women) were necessarily or always opposed to investments in cattle, since cattle were, as I have argued, clear evidence of the efforts of all household members (including women) to *build the homestead*. Further, money invested in cattle was money saved for future use (rather than squandered on alcohol, for instance), although usually for fairly specific, even prescribed, expenditure, such as the paying of school fees or the costs of a funeral or another ritual.

The interviews I conducted with women and men made it clear that, although married men as household heads (a relatively modest proportion of the households in my sample of 90 households)⁴ may conduct and control in a public sense the activities that related to the husbandry, purchase, sale and slaughter of cattle, these activities took place in consultation and only after reaching some degree of agreement with their respective wives on how to proceed with their plans. One middle-aged unemployed man whose *umzi* held eight cattle (inherited from his father), and who relied on his wife who was employed in town to give him pocket money, told me that

⁴ Forty per cent of the households in my Loverstwit sample and 32% of the households in the Hamburg sample were headed by married men.

‘[I]t is very difficult to be a man these days, really...my wife is...[continually] wanting to know about this and the cost of that...’

As social spaces and economic opportunities opened up for more women, especially younger (employed) and older (pensioned) women, so the push for greater independence from the patriarchal social order, which was still dominant in the villages of the rural Eastern Cape, became ever more strident (Liebenberg 1997; Mager 1989; Ngwane 2001). With the advent of democracy in 1994, the ‘low-intensity war’ that had raged between men and women in the rural hinterland for decades – overlain by the patriarchy that was reintroduced and entrenched through apartheid social engineering (see Mager 1999) – has been brought increasingly into the open (cf. Cornwall 2001).⁵

Where generational conflict between older and younger men had once taken centre stage, regional newspapers in the Eastern Cape during the 1990s began to register case upon case of serious domestic violence, rape and even murder against women and girl-children, with women in the deprived former bantustan reserve areas of the Transkei and Ciskei faring particularly poorly in this regard (Wood & Jewkes 2001).⁶ A regional newspaper reporting on this crisis under the headline ‘*What’s wrong with SA men?*’ noted that in 2001 a staggering 52,860 rapes were reported in South Africa and a woman was killed by her partner every six days (*Daily Dispatch* 12 September 2003).⁷

⁵ In Ado, Nigeria, one woman who had left her husband told Cornwall, ‘I have been to the war front and returned peacefully. Enough is enough’ (Cornwall 2001: 81).

⁶ A letter written to the *Daily Dispatch* newspaper (12 August 1999), pointed out that ‘the unemployment situation of our country has turned the sons and daughters of the current pensioners into their dependents, let alone the little orphans [sic] left at the mercy of these pensioners by the same dependents.’ Compare this with the quotation from some 65 years earlier, from a Mpondo informant of Hunter that ‘[F]ormerly an *umzi* was under the thumb of the father, now it is under the thumb of the son’ (Hunter 1936: 60, quoted in McAllister 1985: 132).

⁷ During my stay in Hamburg, there were two separate cases of local men who were accused of raping a minor and a mentally retarded women respectively. Although I never actually witnessed acts of physical violence, I was reliably informed that wife-beating ‘happens all the time’ in both Loverstwest and Hamburg and was a topic of daily conversation in the village. Men beating their girlfriends and their *ukuhlalisana* partners was also very common. When pressed for examples, one young male informant indicated that he himself had been arrested the previous year for beating his (then) girlfriend. The girl’s single mother, although very upset, declined to press charges against him. Asked to recall another example, he mentioned, without any hesitation, his friend in Port Elizabeth, who was arrested and sentenced to three weeks in prison for severely beating his (then) girlfriend, which left her with ‘scars on her head’.

The patriarchal *ukwakh'umzi* project rested on the (putative, as it was sometimes more abstract than real) presence of a man as *intloko yekhaya* [the head of the home], fulfilling the role of *intsika yekhaya* [pillar of the home].⁸ This project, which ideally included presiding over a 'byre with fresh manure' (i.e. evidence that the homestead held cattle, a fact that was pleasing to the ancestors), appeared to be under serious threat, and the backlash from men to these threats was characterised by acts of violence (see Ramphele 2000).⁹

Thus far, I have characterised the gender and generational struggles that were waged in Peddie District around cattle and broader projects of accumulation in relation to different age cohorts, to the relative successes and failures of men in holding down employment over the long term, to the principle of male primogeniture and to cultural imperatives around the need to provision and underpin the rural *umzi* in a material and a ritual sense, which included supporting poorer *imizi* in the village through the idiom of *masincedisane*.

In this chapter, I pay closer attention to the gendered and generational struggles for the rural homestead and the village. Again, I use cattle-holding and exchange as my analytical point of entry to examine some aspects of these struggles. As I have argued in preceding chapters, it was clear that differently situated people had different interests in the wider cultural economics of cattle. If married women took a keen interest from the 'side-lines' (at least in public) in the essentially male-mediated cattle economy, then widows, especially those with adult sons, sometimes registered a more ambivalent interest in the cattle of the *umzi*, which they held in trust for their (eldest) sons.

For their part, single women, both never-married mothers who were heads of their households and other single women without children, showed least interest in the cattle economy as a form of investment, certainly for their own households. But even they had a residual interest in that they could enter this economy through acceptance of cattle as bridewealth that was due to them when a daughter married (see Jones

⁸ This is somewhat different to the more legalistic *umnini wendlu* [lit. the owner of the house] to which Jones (1996) refers. See De Jager (1971: 175) for the normative duties and responsibilities of the *intsika yekhaya* role (cf. Minnaar 2003).

⁹ Including acts of violence against women suspected of practising witchcraft, with widows often targetted in this regard.

1996: 118). More controversially, when her own father died, a separated woman might try to claim a share of the cattle previously paid as bridewealth for her at the time of her marriage. Whatever the extent of their current (structurally contingent) interest in cattle, everyone in the villages of Loverstwest and Hamburg was aware of the high cash-equivalent value of cattle, and through kinship and neighbourhood ties to cattle-holding homesteads retained an interest in investments in and the daily use, exchange and consumption of cattle.

Cutting across these structural concerns were generational issues of class and lifestyle aspirations. Many of the generation of younger rural women and men were intent on the decidedly modernist accumulation of commodities that their parents and grandparents were denied under the apartheid regime. With some notable exceptions, they scoffed at the notion of owning cattle, frequently resisted pressures to contribute their labour towards the husbandry of the livestock of the *umzi*, and were scornful of the whole notion of pursuing an agrarian lifestyle in the former reserves. They had good reasons for adopting this position, since it was amply supported by the evidence around them. Agricultural output in general has been on a steadily downward trajectory for decades (see Simkins 1984) and was seen by many younger people as part of *ubuqaba*, i.e. the complex of traditionalist and conservative rural values (see Bank & Qambata 1999: 84-5).

Reinforcing its association with *ubuqaba* values, examples of conspicuous, personal enrichment through success in agricultural production were indeed rare. By contrast, the 'expectations of modernity' on the part of the younger generation placed a premium on what they saw as burgeoning urban culture – tantalisingly within reach in the city of East London – and its (costly) icons of fashionable clothing and up-to-the-minute accessories like the latest-model cellular telephones, televisions, sound systems and even motor-cars. The cruel reality was that these expectations look set to be dashed, as the opportunities for any sustained upward mobility by the poorly educated majority of youth (other than by high-risk, illegal means) showed no signs of growing (Everatt 2000).¹⁰ But this may only have increased the allure and aspirational nature of this sort of lifestyle.

¹⁰ In rural Peddie District (and much of the Eastern Cape), anyone under the age of 34-35 years was considered to be 'a youth' and did not enjoy all the social rights of a Xhosa adult. Needless to say, this

In earlier chapters, I have presented several case-studies of predominantly men and male-headed *imizi* with a range of investment strategies that could, to some extent, be plotted along the household developmental cycle. Here, I concentrate on issues relating to female-headed households,¹¹ especially single women (with or without children) and their relations with the wider community, including where these relations intersect with men and male-headed households.

Spurred on by the post-1994 government-endorsed emphasis on greater 'gender equity' (which was itself given a boost by contemporaneous events such as the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing), rural women were asserting themselves economically and socially with considerable vigour.¹² At times, they couched their assertiveness in relation to men, which was often overt in community meetings and social functions, in the rights-based discourses on gender equity that began to seep into the rural villages. In increasing numbers, women in Peddie District were prepared to 'go it alone' without men, either by shunning marriage altogether or through divorce or estrangement (Preston-Whyte 1978, 1981: 159). They found the means to head their households and secure their livelihoods (however meagre) and tried to educate their children.¹³ They socialised mainly with other women in church groups, transacted with each other in rotating credit associations or burial societies and generally 'built the homestead' in broad adherence with Xhosa cultural norms, but without the social stigma that in earlier decades came with the status of being

had been fiercely contested in recent times, not least by the young 'comrades' in the struggle for liberation (see Bank 2002a).

¹¹ Renewed attention paid to female-headed households in the Eastern Cape notwithstanding, this form of household was hardly a recent phenomenon, as the Mayers (1971 [1961]), Pauw (1963) and others recorded them as common in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The gross number and proportion of female-headed households does, however, seemed to have increased in the past three decades or so (Manona 1980a). Mayer's preface in Pauw (1963: vii) argues for the continued relevance of patriarchal authority, claiming that 'the patrifocal family...is both the moral and statistical norm of the Xhosa, urban as well as "tribal", from the white-collared, down to the humble, unskilled worker...' (see Jones 1996: 15).

¹² It would be interesting to explore if and how post-1994 legislation that allows for abortion 'on demand' at state hospitals and the public campaign to promote condom use to combat HIV/Aids, has empowered young women in different socio-economic categories to exercise greater control over their sexual practices. For its part, the state-provided child support grant (R100 per month in April 2001) was said to encourage young women to have babies in the mistaken belief that this modest grant will give them greater financial independence.

¹³ Wilson (1981: 143) argues that since the gap in the age at marriage for men and women was five to seven years and increasing, there were many more marriageable women than men and thus nearly a fifth of the women found themselves without men to marry. In my sample of 90 households in Loverstwit and Hamburg, I found that only 27% and 32% of households respectively had spouses actually living together at the time of the survey.

amankazana [unmarried mothers] (see Wilson 1981: 143). Indeed, in rural Peddie District, with high levels of rural-urban mobility, the stigma of illegitimate births seemed to have fallen away decades ago for most people, irrespective of socio-economic status, except perhaps for a minority of well-off families.

On the strength of his research into 'matrifilial families' in the village of Bathurst,¹⁴ Jones (1996: 26,70) found that the recognition of women's rights (independent of men) to residential property was a central element of their pursuit of singlehood and matrifilial family organisations (cf. Preston-Whyte 1981: 168). Jones points out that until the 1980s African women in South Africa were accorded the legal status of perpetual minors and one of the implications of this was that these women were unable to hold title to or inherit fixed property.¹⁵ This argument would apply to the communal tenure villages of Peddie District, but less so to newly established villages like Loverstwest or in the new 'RDP' housing section of Hamburg (see below). Moreover, I came across examples which illustrated that it was possible for monied families to buy plots of land in rural Peddie for their daughters in areas where freehold land was titled.

Probably the key reason for their preference for domestic arrangements that excluded men as husbands – especially husbands who were either insecurely employed or unemployed and permanently resident in the village – related to women's improved independent access to personal income and state-provided pensions and grants. Jones (1996) also noted that the proximity of Bathurst to metropolitan employment areas and the smallness of the town, which allowed for close co-operation between kinswomen, played a role in women's preferences in this regard. These factors would also apply, to varying degrees, in the villages of Peddie District.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bathurst is situated about 20 kilometres west of the border of Peddie District, between Grahamstown and Port Alfred. The Xhosa-speaking residents of the town mostly comprised people who had lived on farms in the vicinity for several generations.

¹⁵ See Wilson (1981: 144-5) for the erosion of the property rights of Xhosa women under early colonial law and well into the twentieth century.

¹⁶ Women in relatively well-off male-headed households are often subject to more gender discrimination, including abuse and greater livelihood insecurity than women and girl-children in poorer female-headed households (Ardington & Lund 1996: 50). Moreover, it is incorrect to automatically associate female-headedness with household economic marginality, as poverty studies routinely do. I encountered a considerable number of households in the villages of Peddie District, headed by either widows of decades-long standing or by unmarried mothers, which could be counted among the better-educated and better-off rural households (cf. Wilson 1981: 145).

Contests over the ‘cattle of inheritance’

Given this context of livelihoods under threat and heightened gender contestation, the inheritance of cattle, which constituted a major financial resource in the rural economy, could take on particular importance. Gendered struggles over rights to homestead cattle focussed particularly on the categories of inherited cattle and bridewealth cattle, and combinations of these two. I came across numerous examples of the members of particular homesteads engaged in tacit and open struggles that have arisen around the sometimes unacceptable ways that inherited cattle were hoarded or disposed of. The Nteng case was one such example from Loverstwest.

The case of the Nteng family cattle, Loverstwest

Mr.Nteng and Mrs. Nteng, who have both died, had three daughters and two sons. Their eldest son had also died. The second son, Vuyisile, recently found work on the mines in *eRhawutini* [Gauteng]. One sister lived in Plettenberg Bay, another lived at Peddie Extension and the third, unmarried, sister, Nomfusi, lived at home in Loverstwest. The problem, my male informant [who was a neighbour of the Nteng family] told me, is that Nomfusi and Vuyisile were twins (about 57 years old). Nomfusi lived *ekhaya'enkulu* [at the big home], while Vuyisile had set up his own house nearby. The cattle of their deceased father were still at the big home. Sometimes, the sons of Vuyisile would take the cattle to their father's place, to treat them with the mixture of acaricide and discarded engine oil that was used for tick control. This upset Nomfusi who maintained that the cattle were supposed to stay at the big home. Vuyisile's wife often got involved, arguing loudly in public with Nomfusi.

The previous year, Vuyisile and his wife had taken an ox from his father's byre and sold it in the Tyolumnqa area, because they were struggling to make ends meet. This caused a fall-out with Nomfusi who insisted that they should have cleared it with her first. Nomfusi was unemployed, with only her daughter working at the Engen petrol station in the town of Peddie, and she could hardly be regarded as well-off. Vuyisile then found work on the mines and his wife found a job as a domestic worker in neighbouring Tuku village. Complicating the dispute was the contention that at least some of the cattle in question were from the *lobolo* of an elder sister.

My (male) informant was adamant that Vuyisile, the surviving son, was the rightful owner of these 'cattle of inheritance' (see Wilson 1981: 145). My informant's opinion was that the problem was simply that Vuyisile had not unequivocally (i.e. publicly) moved away from his natal homestead. Instead, he had merely built his own house close by. Proof of this was that, 'when he conducted his *imisebenzi* [rituals], he still did them at the big [parental] home.'

The point here is that Vuyisile had not yet (ritually) asserted his independence as a married man from his natal home. This assertion must be recognised as such by his family, his ancestors and the larger community of Loverstwit. Their attendance at the *ukuvula'mzi* [to open the home] ritual he would host to this end would signal this recognition. Through the ritual, his social rights as a man with his own homestead were recognised and confirmed, and this would place him in a somewhat better position to assert his right over the family cattle. With this increased authority, however, would come the responsibility of caring for his unmarried sisters and their dependents. Until this ritual had been conducted, his assumption of a new status in the family was tenuous and was likely to be contested by his sisters. It was also likely to be a cause for concern for other people in the village, who would be reluctant to transact in cattle or matters relating to cattle with the Ntenge family.

If her brother had any plans to make off with the family cattle by stealth and to shirk his longer-term responsibilities to his siblings, Nomfusi's ability to prevent this could prove to be quite limited (see Jones 1996: 146-7). It was for this reason that she monitored the movements of her deceased father's cattle closely and insisted that all the cattle remain in the byre of the parental home. In the absence of her female siblings who could back her up in this dispute, she resorted to making the spat a public one, with the hope of bringing the weight of community sanction (including the support of a number of other women in situations similar to hers) to bear on her brother to bring him to order.

In August 2001, in a similar case in Hamburg, I was told that Crawford Ngxaba had sold an animal to a Raduma homestead. The Radumas required an animal in order to conduct a slaughter ritual. This animal was not Crawford's to sell and his action was a cause of unhappiness in his family. Unravelling what had transpired in this case

highlighted many of the issues that emerged as central in my analysis of the micro-politics of the cattle in Peddie District.

The case of the Ngxaba family cattle in Hamburg

In November 2000, Crawford Ngxaba, who was then in his late fifties, indicated during the 'herd-survey' that he had three cattle. Five months later, i.e. in April 2001, he had sold all of them. One animal was sold in December 2000 to the Somandla family in the village, where a long-delayed *umgidi* [party] was held for a son who had been initiated three years before. The other two animals were apparently sold at the stocksale. It is unclear whether Crawford kept the proceeds to himself or shared them with his two sisters, Lulama and Noxolo. Why should he share this money? Because, upon closer enquiry, it emerged that the three cattle were not 'really' his. The cattle were his deceased father's cattle and were thus the inheritance of the three siblings. As the only son of his parents, but with two unmarried, *older* sisters, Crawford was (more than usually) obliged to consult his sisters, secure their agreement and then share the proceeds of the sales of the cattle with them.¹⁷

When I made further enquiries into this case, it emerged that Crawford had spent a good deal of his working life in Mdantsane (close to East London), which was also where his second sister (Noxolo) lived. The oldest sister, Lulama, who was an unmarried mother, lived in Hamburg. She was employed locally as a teacher.

While he was employed in East London, Crawford was an irregular visitor to the village and only returned to Hamburg in 1996 when he was retrenched. Before that time, the three cattle had been herded by the son of Noxolo. When this youngster also moved to Mdantsane, the cattle were placed in the Lugabos' *kraal*. Since Ngxaba's deceased mother was from the Lugabo family, this was easy to arrange. Apparently Lulama, who has cattle of her own, did not want too many cattle at her *umzi*, because she was already struggling to secure herding labour.¹⁸ With her own children at

¹⁷ There seems to be less obligation on the son who was the first-born to be as explicitly consultative in this regard.

¹⁸ I failed to uncover exactly how she came to have her own cattle, but my informant suggested two, not mutually exclusive, possibilities. The father of her adult children was a prominent, married man from a neighbouring village. My informant thought it likely that this man had given her cattle years

school, she had already 'imported' a youngster from a Ngxaba family from the distant (Peddie) village of Celetyume, who came to live in her home expressly to herd her cattle.

After 1996, the elderly Lugabo couple both died and Crawford came to take his father's three cattle from their homestead *kraal*. He did not keep the cattle very long before taking them to Khayaletu Mapayi, the holder of the biggest herd in Hamburg, and requesting that Mapayi look after them for him. It was soon after this that Crawford took them from Khayaletu's *kraal* and sold them.

Then Crawford made the mistake of taking one of Lulama's cattle and selling it to a homestead in the village that was planning to conduct a slaughter ritual. He had no right to do so, but before he could be accosted he fled back to Mdantsane. I was told that he had many debts there that resulted from his serious drinking problem. It was these debts, people reasoned, that may have driven him to sell an animal that was not his. Lulama's policeman son was very angry with his uncle but unsure of how to proceed. Pursuing the matter by legal means would mean airing the family problems in public, something he was loathe to do. Also, resolving the matter would require a meeting of the surviving senior members of the family at which Crawford, if he could be prevailed upon to attend, would no doubt admit guilt, but argue that he was broke and unable to repay Lulama or replace the animal.

I enquired whether this was a private matter to be resolved within the Ngxaba family, but my informant thought that it was not, since everyone in the village was aware of it and discussing it. Indeed, in conversations at the dip-tank, senior men unrelated to the Ngxaba family decried Crawford's behaviour, calling him 'a nonsense' and saying that 'he knows money, because he had worked at *Wilson Rowntree* [the confectionary company] before'. They implied that as someone who was unemployed after having a good job, a person like Crawford would be doubly desperate and could not be trusted with money or cattle. The implication was that no-one's cattle were entirely safe from unscrupulous men like him, who would even steal from their own sisters. This sort of response implied that even senior men were relatively powerless

before to assist her with raising a family as an unmarried mother and that she had nurtured this herd. The other possibility was that her policeman son had built up the herd since he had started working.

to act against stock-thieves, a fact which threatened the local cattle economy. It also shows how, no matter the extent to which people in the village knew who owned which cattle, it could be problematic to buy cattle locally. The Raduma family that bought the cow from Crawford, probably at a discount, could be accused of abetting him but they would plead ignorance regarding who the true owner of the animal was. What is certain is that Lulama Ngxaba would have advised everyone in the village not to buy cattle from her brother in future, as his rights in family cattle had come to an end when he sold the last of these cattle. Given her own stature in the village and that of her son, this was something that most people in the village would take seriously. However, this case and the preceding one point to the abiding sense of entitlement on the part of many men with regard to their residual rights over the 'cattle of inheritance'.

This sense of entitlement by men was one of the reasons why single women often steered clear of cattle-holding and instead invested their financial resources and efforts elsewhere. But the contests over homestead property, which often include cattle, could be just as vexatious when it was a woman asserting her rights, as the case of *MaRadebe* demonstrates.

The case of *MaRadebe*, caught between feuding affines

MaRadebe was born in 1930 into a large well-known family in Bodiam, the village adjacent to Hamburg. She went to school in Bodiam and finished with a Std.5 (seven years of schooling). At 16 years old, she started working as a domestic worker on the neighbouring white-owned farms. In 1960, at the age of 30, she married Bhunga Zatho, who paid seven cattle as *lobolo* to *MaRadebe's* father. Bhunga was not well educated. Bhunga's mother, Maggie, was from a Hamburg family and she had returned from her married home in Mpekweni village (in Peddie District) to Hamburg to work in the local hotel. Maggie had three daughters and two sons. Bhunga was the younger of her sons.

By 1964, *MaRadebe* was working in East London as a domestic worker and had her first child. In 1969, her husband stopped working on the mines and the family moved to East London. They set up in the one-roomed house owned by *MaRadebe's* father in Duncan Village.

MaRadebe's six children were born in East London, but they were all sent back to Hamburg where they were cared for by her sister who had married a Hamburg man. In 1992, when the grandchild that *MaRadebe* had adopted as her own daughter was eight years old, *MaRadebe* and her husband finally returned to Hamburg. Because of tension between Bhunga and the rest of his family, they did not live at or even near his natal home. Instead, they rented a house elsewhere in the village. *MaRadebe* and her husband survived by 'jobbing' at the municipality until 1995, when they both belatedly managed to secure old-age pensions.

The substantial herd of cattle that Bhunga's mother, Maggie, had built up over the years was thanks, at least initially, to the 12 animals paid as *lobolo* for Bhunga's oldest sister, Nomawethu, who now resided in Cape Town. The older brother, who worked for the Ciskei Police, had also augmented the family herd by buying some heifers, believing that he would inherit this herd eventually. Bhunga, partly because of his poor relations with his mother and siblings, and perhaps partly because of his structural position as the younger son, had failed to build the family herd.

I was told that Maggie, a 'strong woman with a mind of her own', had sold some of these *lobolo* cattle at the stock sale to build a new house, and that some of the other cattle had died. At one stage, Nomawethu sent her first-born son, Zolile, to live with his grandmother to assist with the cattle. Another sister, who was a nurse in Cape Town, assisted her mother financially to build and extend the main house. Once Zolile, the herder, had grown up and moved back to Cape Town, Nomawethu encouraged the daughter (Ntombi) of her nursing sister to occupy the main house, presumably in an attempt to prevent Bhunga and his family from doing so.

By the late 1990s, Bhunga's older brother (who had risen to become a Brigadier in the Ciskeian police), his mother Maggie and his middle sister, the nurse, had all passed away. Bhunga and his family finally took possession of the natal homestead in Hamburg, displacing Ntombi, who moved elsewhere in Hamburg. Bhunga and his sons began to milk the remaining cows, getting plenty of milk to make *amasi* [sour milk].

Bhunga began to treat these cattle as his own, and instructed his sons to herd and dip the animals as required. He even took to selling some cattle and slaughtered an animal to conduct an ancestor ritual.

In late 1999, however, Bhunga was stabbed to death by one of his sons. The commentary in the village was that this was just deserts for his maltreatment of his by-then deceased mother, Maggie. This left *MaRadebe*, his pensioned widow, with three dependents occupying the family homestead. When Bhunga died, his sister in Cape Town, Nomawethu, attended his funeral and laid claim to all the remaining cattle, saying that some were her *lobolo* and some were those of her other deceased brother. None were Bhunga's and thus none would become the property of his widow, *MaRadebe*, or her sons.

MaRadebe told me that she could not 'touch' the five remaining cattle, which included three cows. Her sons were only required to look after these animals, seemingly as a *quid pro quo* for their continued occupation of the Zatho family home. They derived no benefits from these cattle, particularly as the three remaining cows had tick-damaged udders and could no longer be milked.

Thus, after 39 years of marriage, *MaRadebe* was left in an unenviable position because of a family dispute between her deceased husband and his siblings. For her livelihood and that of her three dependents, she relied on her old-age pension and the occasional remittance from her son who was 'jobbing' in Cape Town. Her sister-in-law in Cape Town, Nomawethu, laid claim to everything at the Zatho homestead, including the cattle in question, the house and the plot of land on which it was built. It was possible, *MaRadebe* thought, that Nomawethu might come back to Hamburg and expel her and her children from the family home. Actually, the likelihood of this happening was remote. As long as Nomawethu was unable or unwilling to find someone that she regarded as more trustworthy than *MaRadebe*, the family's occupation of the Zatho family home looked safe. But when *MaRadebe* passes away, her dependents may be rather more vulnerable in respect of their continued occupation of the home.

This particular case of a somewhat belated ‘absentee owner’ in the shape of Nomawethu shows how the many factors that built or broke social harmony among members of the *umzi* impacted in a real way both on how the property of the *umzi* was contested and how circuits of reciprocity and support among the dispersed members of the *umzi* were maintained or cut off. In this unfolding drama, calculations of what constitutes ‘ownership’ of the cattle of the home often played a contentious role. The cattle at the Zatho home were no longer closely herded. Where it was said they were once carefully hand-dressed to remove ticks, I frequently saw them covered with ticks. Indeed, *MaRadebe* and her two sons had little incentive to expend effort on them and the condition of ‘Nomawethu’s cattle’ was likely to deteriorate.

Negotiating marriage and bridewealth

A great deal has now been written on the subject of bridewealth in southern Africa (Krige and Comaroff [eds].1981; Murray 1981a; Kuper 1982). Perhaps the most interesting thing I found consistently was that the young women who were recently married and those who had imminent plans to marry, especially those with children from earlier, pre-marital relationships, seemed to do so very strategically and conditionally. This was because marriage was an area that was fraught with problems for them, especially as it was (still) formally mediated by senior men. Young women, especially those from well-to-do ‘respectable’ families, were usually expected to proceed along a predictable route to marriage. This includes the sometimes drawn-out negotiation of bridewealth between male representatives of the two families, the subsequent initiation of *lobolo* transfers, conducting a ‘white wedding’ (which might virtually be repeated in two different settings, in the village and in town or at the homes of the bride and of the groom) and, finally, taking up virilocal residence.

All this required that the couple submit to a considerable degree of control by senior men and women. For the bride, this period of submission could extend well into her married life. As a *makoti* [newly married woman], she was expected to adhere (often strictly) to a culturally sanctioned code of dress, behaviour and disposition towards her new affines, including her husband’s sisters.¹⁹ This role, which was invariably

¹⁹ A *makoti* [new bride] was, for instance, often made, by her new mother-in-law and sisters-in-law, to do a great deal of the manual work in the home, because it was said that *uzengekhukho* [she came with

enforced by her female affines, could be particularly onerous and many young women balked at the prospect of being in this position in more than a symbolic sense.²⁰ One young woman whose best friend had just got married put it as follows:

The only way to prevent being maltreated as a *makoti* is not to go into a marriage where you are living with your in-laws, because if you do, you will do everything for them. Even daughters who [previously] would wake up and make tea for their father, and would clean their room and the rest of the house, will stop doing any of this as soon as there is a *makoti* in the home. It is the *makoti*'s job to do these things... Women are jealous of each other, they don't want to make space for a new wife, they want her just to do everything.

The case of Nomhle's careful plans for marriage

Thirty-one-year-old Nomhle was the mother of a premarital child. Now she planned to marry another man, who was employed as a policeman in Hamburg. Three *oonozakuzaku* [representatives of her prospective husband's family] had arrived at her father's home in Hamburg to initiate negotiations with Nomhle's patrilineal kin.²¹ I interviewed her a few days after their visit.

The negotiations have to be done by men, women can't do them at all, even if, as a man, you haven't got a father or close male relatives. My boyfriend has brought R4,000 and 3 bottles of brandy, so even now I could go to his place as his *makoti*, because R4,000 is a lot of money [to pay]. But he still has to pay [the equivalent of] 10 cattle, around R13,000 [although the actual amount has not been decided yet].

I will go to his home [in Tamara village, near King William's Town] in three weeks time, but only for a weekend, as I am working [and have to be at work on Monday]. It is tough to be a *makoti*, so I don't want to stay there, but I will have to wear the clothes of a *makoti* even when I am back in Hamburg [at work]. I am a bit worried about his sisters, who have been fine so far, changing now that I am a *makoti* in their family. [But] I know I

a grass mat], in other words, she was married into this family, with all the responsibilities and workload that this involved (cf. Liebenberg 1997).

²⁰ One of the expectations was that the *makoti* must collect firewood and hoe in the field. These were things that many young women were very loathe to do.

²¹ This group of men included senior men who shared the same clan (*Ndlangisa*), but who did not appear to be actually related to Nomhle's father.

will come home after just one weekend, so it's not a long-term thing that I have to endure. As for his sisters, one is away studying in Transkei and the older one is married and has her own place in Tamara. My boyfriend's mother has died and it is only his father at their home...[Also] my boyfriend is the 4th-born son, so there are very few [formal] responsibilities for him in his family.

[As for my family] I was going to leave home and find my own place anyway, even if I didn't marry now. I can't live here all the time, especially when Patrick and them get married, their wives will be here, which would be too much.

I know my [future] husband will continue to have other girlfriends after we are married, but I keep his bank card. If he wants money, he has to ask me. My friends do the same thing, to stop our partners spending money on their girlfriends. I plan to have a house in Port Alfred because I like that place and I want my husband to get a job in the SAPS [South African Police Service] there. My husband already has five children, all with different women. He supports them all and one of these children has just moved in here with my family. He will have to keep on supporting them, and I will spend my money only on my new family. None of my money will go to these other children or women. I would like us to have one child [together].

Nomhle admitted that she had planned this marriage very carefully. She loved her boyfriend, she said, and this was why, even in these times when other women her age were refusing to marry, she still wanted to marry him. She had obviously closely observed the realities of other contemporary marriages and she was trying to cover every contingency. Of course, her status as an employed woman afforded her considerably more latitude in this regard than many other young women. The decision to get married was unequivocally her own.²²

²² And when I interviewed her father three weeks later, he admitted discussing with Nomhle (among others) how much bridewealth he should demand, partly perhaps because of the fact that she had a premarital child, but also because she would have worked out exactly what she needs to buy and how much her prospective husband can afford. He was initially adamant that the bridewealth being paid for his daughter as cash was his and only his to do with as he wanted, 'such as buying household expenses, educating his children, and so on.' However, when I pressed him further about why he did not ask for some of the bridewealth to be paid in cattle, he revealed that 'we will need to buy things for the

Other, poorer, women are forced to settle for less formal marriages. I was present at a beer-drink when *MaDlamini* (58 years old and a poor widow) said that, 'as long as you have some nice clothes and food in your stomach, then even R10 *lobelo* is enough'. This is in line with Jones' (1996: 46) assertion that '...customary marriage has lost its central defining aspect; the transfer of rights in and to a woman and her offspring is not formally transacted [in cattle].' Based on his fieldwork among mostly poorer households in Bathurst, Jones (1996: 51) goes on to argue that

[B]ecause marriage is nowadays seldom transacted in the economic sense, paternity too is seldom transacted...[and] the ambiguities of such marriage introduce a host of corresponding ambiguities in respect of children's jural and kinship identities.

As the case of Nomhle demonstrates, where bridewealth was still exchanged, the young women from better-off families wanted far more say over the nature and distribution of the bridewealth paid to marry them. While in a formal sense they might continue to be excluded from any formal control of such bridewealth which was still negotiated between men, in practice young women were actively involved behind the scenes. They were, for instance, keen to ensure that bridewealth was paid in cash, rather than in cattle. Bridewealth paid in cash, these prospective brides knew, bolstered their interests in having most of the bridewealth, which was formerly strictly the domain of their fathers, spent on meeting the costs of their wedding itself (if an elaborate, 'white' wedding) and on buying specific wedding gifts (including items such as a lounge suite and a bedroom suite and domestic appliances) that would grace their future home.

At best, their mothers were ambivalent allies in this project, as bridewealth as cash which was spent on wedding-related expenses, while it built the reputation of the *umzi* in the village, necessarily seeped away from the natal homestead. Jones (1996: 54) noted, and my own experience in Peddie District confirmed, that older women continued to attach considerable importance to the social status that comes to women through marriage. In contrast to cash, *lobolo* paid as cattle would increase the status

married couple, so we need cash.' It seemed that, while working within the constraints of someone in her position, Nomhle had thoroughly covered every angle of this important change in her status as a woman.

of the *umzi*, and would also act as a savings bulwark against any future livelihood crises in the natal household. The downside of bridewealth cattle for the prospective bride's mother was that they would be controlled by her husband (and possibly his agnates if the latter had supported him or his *umzi* in the past) and any future sales of cattle were likely to be a matter of negotiation between the bride's mother and father.

In the next section, I examine the extent to which the 'rise' of these young women, who were not overly committed to marriage²³ and tended to be dismissive of the dominant role of men, actually threatened to disrupt the rural moral and social order that was predicated on the patriarchy of senior men and the localised cultural economy, which included cattle, that they dominate.²⁴ In a situation where formal marriages and thus *lobolo* exchanges were less frequent, men (in their capacities as patrilineal kin and the husbands who supplied bridewealth) were in danger of losing whatever control they previously had over women's fertility (reproductive) functions.²⁵ As a result, men had also increasingly lost control of women's productive powers, in respect of controlling their labour in the domestic sphere, household and for agricultural production, as well as their remuneration for work done outside the household.²⁶ The negotiation and control of *lobolo* payments for those women who still 'submitted' to marriage could be a seriously contested site of social intersection between the old and the emerging regimes of value.²⁷ This was an arena in which the crumbling structure of rural patriarchy was pitted against (individual) young women who were often better-educated and had more social and economic room to

²³ Jones (1996: 153) found that 80% of women between the ages of 15 and 32 had never married, while it was clear that 'women in Bathurst are most unlikely to marry after [they reach] their early thirties.'

²⁴ Cattle and other things patriarchal maintained a semblance of male dominance, captured in the following intriguing extract from an interview with Mr. Daliso in Hamburg (on 27 February 2001): 'As a Xhosa man, I slaughter for my father [at his death] to *khapa* and *buyisa* him to the *kraal*, this is where the ancestors are. No women are allowed in the *kraal*, ancestors only speak to men. [A] woman can dream about the ancestors, then she tells the men that she dreamed about a grandfather who wants meat or beer. The actual ritual is only done by men.'

²⁵ As I have argued consistently, considerable evidence exists to show that men have lost their urban-based unskilled jobs in large numbers (Philip 2000). Such has been the domestic and economic fallout that many of these men have consequently lost and/or abandoned their roles as bread-winners, providers and symbols of moral authority as the household heads in their domestic units. The payment of bridewealth has also suffered, with a consequent rise in non-formal *ukuhlalisana* [to live together] relationships (see Jones 1996; Bank 2002b).

²⁶ Mayer (1980b: 35) makes this point exactly, i.e. that 'men gradually lost control over the female reproductive powers, by the transformation of marriage payments for daughters (*lobolo*) into indirect dowries (cf. Erlank 2000).

²⁷ Widows and unmarried mothers can be as demanding as men/fathers in their attempts to secure a proper bridewealth for their daughters.

manoeuvre than women in previous generations (see Manona *et al.* 1996; Manona 1999). I recorded a number of cases in which a married woman was keeping a very close eye on the cattle of her deceased father that had been inherited by her brother, because this herd included *lobolo* paid for her (see below).

Bukeka Madinda: a young, single mother's approach to cattle

My family is from Mt. Coke area [adjacent to King William's Town]. We are *Tshawe* (clan). My grandfather moved to Hamburg. I am 29 years old and the youngest of 3 children. My brother is the eldest. He is employed as an assistant manager at Metro Cash and Carry [a wholesaler] in King William's Town. My sister is a nursing sister in Grahamstown. My father worked in Cape Town before. He is retired and now receives an old-age pension. Last year he had a stroke, which has really affected him.

I matriculated in 1992. I then studied computers for two years. I have two children [who have] different fathers. Only one of these men supports our child. I live with my two children at my parents' home in Hamburg. There are eight cattle at home. They are my brother's cattle, given to him by our grandfather when my father was in Cape Town. My brother has looked after them all along, so it has nothing to do with my father.

AA: Would you want *lobolo* paid [to your family] when or if you get married?

BM: Yes, but it should be paid in cash, maybe R10,000 would do, as [*lobolo*] cattle are about R1,200 these days.²⁸

AA: That would make it about eight cattle?

BM: Yes, but I would want the money to be paid though [not cattle]. I would want this money from my parents, once it was paid as *lobolo*, or at least some of it, to start my own house and spend it on things I want.

AA: Why not have your *lobolo* paid in cattle?

BM: Because cattle are expensive to keep. They need you to get someone to look after them, so they cost money.

AA: But they increase faster than money in the bank and the bank also charges you fees to administer your money...

²⁸ The considerable discrepancy between the value of an animal arrived at through bridewealth negotiations and the often much higher market price of the same animal, gave senior men cause to argue that owning cattle allowed a man to sell some of his cattle to pay *lobolo* [and still have cattle left afterwards]. They argued that 'this thing of paying *lobolo* in cash is new, and came about because of a lack of cattle'. I did not seek to verify this claim, but it seems to be a distortion of the facts, unless these men still regard a practice that is now several decades old as 'new'.

BM: Yes, but cattle can be stolen easily and then you are left with nothing.

AA: Do you want your *lobolo* to be paid in cash because you are afraid that if it is paid in cattle, then your fathers and brothers [i.e. patrilineal kin] will say that the cattle are under their control as men and then you will have no say over when and how to dispose of them?

BM: No, even if they were real cattle, they would be my cattle, not my brother's at all.²⁹

Bukeka was typical of the younger generation of assertive, no-nonsense young women, who had often given birth at least once by their mid-twenties, and whom I encountered frequently in rural Peddie District. Although she had post-secondary formal training in basic computer operating skills from a private college in East London, she had thus far failed to find employment. She was friendly with the young women who work at the municipality in Hamburg and, when young people were recruited to assist with the conducting of the national census in 2001, she was fortunate enough to secure a job as a local census enumerator. Because she was unemployed, Bukeka lived at home with her parents, where she looked after her two children and assisted with the domestic chores. The family subsisted on her father's old-age pension and her mother's income, earned as a cleaner at the Hamburg clinic. Support in cash and in kind also came from Bukeka's brother and sister. Their homestead was well-kept and the *umzi* made up part of the 'respectable' educated section of the Hamburg community.

Note that in the Madinda *umzi* there was some contention over the existing herd of cattle, but that Bukeka had no say in how this herd was utilised. Also, although Bukeka was forthright about how she saw her (thus far hypothetical) marriage unfolding, it was worth noting that her aspirations and what might eventually transpire in this regard may in fact be poles apart. For a start, the fact that she already had two children would not be an attraction to potential suitors. Also, her own economic prospects did not look particularly rosy. She had no steady income of her own and was reluctant to start a business (for instance, hairdressing) in Hamburg,

²⁹ This was a position that many young women took regarding (admittedly hypothetical) bridewealth payments. One young woman, who owned a *shebeen* in Phola Park, and whose parents had both passed away, told me that if her (hypothetical) *lobolo* was paid in cattle, she would arrange for her elder brother to sell all the cattle and give her the money. She definitely did not want cattle, but the *lobolo* was unequivocally hers.

because as she put it, the ‘people here don’t have money to pay for anything’. Like young adults in other rural households, she looked instead to the city as a more desirable site of employment and as an avenue of escape from what she regarded as the stifling drudgery of the village.

One further example of the assertiveness of young women was the case recounted to me by a bemused 39-year-old-man, Vumile Hokwana.

When I attended a ritual in Durban Village recently, my sister’s daughter [who is a young adult] asked me where she could get a cow to slaughter for a graduation party that she wanted to host. I told her that she should ask my father (her grandfather), as he has cattle. She asked me how much I thought it might cost and I said was that it is impossible for anyone [i.e. even kin] to get a cow for less than R1,000 these days.³⁰ She went away and when I saw her later she told me that she would come down to Hamburg, ‘even without money’, as there are some of her mother’s *lobolo* cattle in her grandfather’s kraal [to which she feels she has some claim].³¹

Whatever their views now – and assuming that the spread of the HIV/Aids pandemic can be arrested in the near future – some (perhaps many) of these young people will constitute the senior generational cohort in the village in thirty or so years time. They are arguably more likely to have an interest then in upholding the cultural forms and social practices that will be meaningful to them then given their structural positions as heads of households, as husbands, wives, single mothers and (presumably) as rural residents with a stake in the local cultural economy.³² They are also likely to maintain rural homesteads in some shape or form, because ritual slaughter and ancestor veneration, which ideally take place at the rural home, will no doubt continue to be part of the cultural practices of many Xhosa people.

Women striking out on their own

The *umzi* was, first and foremost, the (residential) site on which the rituals of an agnatically bounded group of patrilineally related kin were conducted. This definition would, however, have disqualified many of the woman-headed households (except

³⁰ This would be about half the current price of a mature cow.

³¹ It was unlikely that this particular line of argument would have swayed Mr. Hokwana, her 77-year old grandfather. However, Mr. Hokwana was likely to supply her with an animal for a token amount, as long as her actual request was suitably deferential.

³² This point was brought home to me one night when Patrick Gusha, my otherwise irreverent 28-year-old-research assistant, shook his head and lamented the young age (16 years) of a boy who was about to ‘go to the bush’ to be circumcised into manhood the following morning.

those headed by widows), from being regarded as *imizi*. A 34-year-old single mother, Nomakutele, who was a resident of a newer section of Hamburg (*Phola Park*, see below) put it plainly when she told me that she went to her father's family home in Hamburg to conduct rituals (her father himself had relocated to Loverstwist after he divorced her mother). 'A cow that I caused to be slaughtered at my mother's home would not bellow', she told me, 'because those [people] are not my ancestors.' In Hamburg, over the course of the past 5-8 years, women and some socially marginal unmarried or separated men had set up their own households in ever-increasing numbers. The 'informal' settlement area to the west of the village, known as *eNdlovini* [lit. the place of the elephant, i.e. a place taken by force], had only existed since 1993. It was also only in 1999 that the small, 33-unit RDP housing development, (known as *Phola Park*, after the infamously violent township settlement in Gauteng Province) was completed.

What these two settlements represented, first and foremost, was a significant 'decompression' of the congestion of the established homesteads in Hamburg. This was what everyone I spoke to about these housing developments in Hamburg told me. Both *eNdlovini* and *Phola Park* threw a lifeline to the many local people, especially single and separated women (in-migration from other villages and areas was limited), who were previously confined within the established village sections.³³ Here, social tensions were reaching boiling point in overcrowded, economically insecure households to the extent that the post-1995 'transitional' local municipal council, made up of local people, applied for 'RDP' funding to initiate a housing project that would address this problem. The upshot was a significant rise in households that were not only smaller in terms of their numbers of household members in these new settlements, but were also socially and economically marginal.³⁴

Nomakutele, mentioned above, lived with her 10-year old daughter in her two-roomed 'RDP' house in *Phola Park*. She told me that, prior to moving to *Phola Park*,

³³ One female 'community leader', who was a driving force behind getting *Phola Park* established, referred to the housing project as a 'women's zone', claiming that 'men are not there, except as lovers or boyfriends, but not as heads of households at all', although this is not strictly true. In many respects, new settlements such as Loverstwist serve the same purpose, i.e. of freeing women (and younger men) from patriarchal controls.

³⁴ Space constraints preclude a detailed exploration of the fascinating, emerging politics of these two residential areas in the context of livelihoods and identity in Hamburg village, Peddie District and 'town', i.e. East London and Port Elizabeth.

they had lived with her mother in a one-roomed mud-brick house. She still visited her mother daily to help her with her domestic chores. She said that there was 'no space to conduct *imisebenzi* (rituals) at her new house' and that her mother had no house.³⁵ For these reasons, she said, once she got the 'title' for her new house, she would sell it and use the proceeds to build another house in the village, on her mother's site, which was adjacent to her mother's family's site.

This phenomenon of an increasing number of (smaller) households within rural village communities was common in parts of Peddie District (see Ainslie 1998).³⁶ In practice, while many of these households resided independently of their natal homesteads, they continued to have close economic, social and ritual ties with their natal homes. As in the example of the Ntenge family (above), it was precisely this *mismatch*, i.e. firstly that a household as a supposedly independent economic unit was not synonymous with a homestead as the unit for social and particularly ritual practice and, secondly, that a homestead might comprise a fluid number of (fragmented) households, that made for further intense social and material contestation. One issue was that, certainly in Phola Park, the sites were so small that there was no space to construct a cattle byre and therefore no place to keep cattle. This meant that the houses here were unlikely to be regarded as *imizi*, real homesteads.

Unmarried (and sometimes long-widowed) women, emerging from patriarchal social relations in rural villages and urban settings, had different social and economic priorities from those of men and were less inclined to 'waste money', as they saw it, on liquor for instance. Many people, both men and women, in rural Peddie District claimed that women 'hold onto' money better than men. Indeed, although alcoholism also affected some women, on the whole they were more inclined than men to be thrifty and socially and entrepreneurially minded, quite possibly because they were the primary providers (if not care-givers) for their children. Where possible, many of

³⁵ Of the 33 owners of housing units in Phola Park, only one claimed to have ritually 'opened' their new home. None of the others saw this as a priority, because they continued to have a ritual and moral affiliation to a homestead in the village.

³⁶ Some of this was undoubtedly driven by the government's use of the nuclear (or single mother headed) household as the unit of choice for social welfare and developmental programmes. Thus the delivery of 'RDP' houses to individual households resulted in bigger family units breaking up in terms of their residential arrangements expressly to gain access to the benefits on offer.

these women relied on formal bank accounts to hold their money. Rather than invest in cattle, their patterns of consumption indicated an altogether more cash-based approach in which they were more integrated into the market domain of the economy than many men and were conversant and less inclined to be suspicious of new 'technologies', such as automated bank tellers and cellular telephones. On the whole, women also tended to display greater interest in apparently 'feminised' forms of saving and were comfortable with dealing in cash, such as rotating credit associations and buying clubs.³⁷ People who hailed from villages in Peddie District, but who worked in the cities, were often members of burial societies (and *imigalelo*) there, contributing to the financial literacy of rural women and some older men.

As more young women turned their backs on marriage as a culturally valued and economically viable institution, preferring instead to set up and maintain their own matrifocal households, the social identities of all men, including those of married men as husbands and fathers, were increasingly brought under scrutiny. In this situation, owning even a small number of cattle and other livestock literally and legitimately gave particularly those men who were formally unemployed *something to do*, rather than loiter around the village and frequent the local *shebeens*, as cattle and their associated activities (ploughing, dipping, herding) could keep men relatively active. As elderly Mr. Hokwana told me,

We have been unemployed for a long time, this is not a new thing. What is different is that it was [unusual] then to find men just sitting around, doing nothing. Instead, [as a man] you were always busy, making a *skei* [yoke] for the oxen, weeding the garden, looking after the cattle or fixing a fence.

While the decline in agricultural activities meant that many men were not in a position to invest their energy so fully in pastoral pursuits, where they still held cattle, men were still afforded some control over the monetary resources in their household and how these resources were allocated towards fulfilling longer-term economic and

³⁷ Although they were active in burial societies, I found very little evidence of participation by men in these clubs. I came across just two cases where men claimed to be members of *imigalelo*, but did not attend meetings and were 'represented' by their daughters, wives or sisters. Young men did, however, have their own 'drinking clubs', some of which were of long-standing (8 years or more) and whose membership corresponded roughly with village section boundaries. The members would all congregate on Christmas Day, according to one informant, each with an expensive bottle of brandy. They would all share the brandy, opening one bottle after another and socialising all day. Then they would go home to sleep and return the next morning to continue drinking in an effort to cure their hang-overs.

social (including ritual) projects. Significantly, by building up a herd, rather than spending their always limited disposable income on girlfriends, drinking or gambling (which was what local women invariably accused them of doing), cattle-ownership connected men into locally significant cultural pathways of prestige and respect. There was a 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 1995) at work here, since even men without cattle could involve themselves in the 'work of cattle', which included, of course, the ritual work of cattle. The activities associated with the 'work of cattle' not only actively excluded women, but rested on, and gave men the (albeit contested) cultural space to re-enact, patriarchal and hierarchical values that dictated, among other things, the 'place of women' and the 'place of children'. It was in this very real sense that men worked for cattle and cattle worked for men and why the women who were no longer closely attached to men had much less interest in cattle.

Conclusions

Gender relations and family life in rural Peddie District were not imploding, but they were very tense. Social relations, including marriage, had been in flux since at least the 1950s, in response to broader changes in the economy and political landscape of the countryside (Mager 1998; Morrell 2001). I found that rural people of necessity continued to find ways of dealing with these changes. One of the significant ways in which women currently sought to deal with profound changes in the status of men was to be far more selective in the relationships they built and sought to sustain with the significant men in their lives. Some women appeared to be steadily erasing men out of their more feminised social milieu. Female-centred multi-generational families headed by women and women assuming greater control of associations and local organisations were indications of these changes.

Marriage and bridewealth constituted another social arena that was now subject to probably greater strategising on the part of young women than in the past when their fathers and male kin played a key role in the negotiation of bridewealth and even in the selection of a husband. Where the young unmarried mother was once regarded with disdain, this was no longer the case. Unless economic prospects for men improved, there were likely to be fewer male-headed households in future and fewer marriages that were cemented by the transfer of *lobolo*, whether in the form of cattle

or cash. Jones (1996: 51) goes as far as to assert that '[t]he relative informality of marriage...gives rise to patterns of reckoning kinship, and means of establishing identity, that may depart significantly from the traditional scheme of things...Quite simply, the essence of the system has altered.' Certainly, issues of paternity and clan affiliation were likely to come to the fore, as there seemed to be no slackening of the strict clan exogamy that characterised Xhosa marriage.

The many and varied future implications of these changes are not clear, but the searing gender violence that characterised the rural Eastern Cape Province was evidence that the patriarchal order, in the persons of younger men, was fighting a desperate rearguard action. This may well succeed only in further alienating men and women from each other. At a different level, as the household and the homestead drifted apart, not least through the development of new settlements of 'matchbox' houses that were not homesteads in the ritual sense, it was clear that rituals were significant sites of social interaction that still brought the genders and generations together. It is to the rituals that people in rural Peddie District conducted, in which cattle and the ancestors were both implicated, that we turn in the following chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Harnessing the power of the ancestors:

Ritual practice in Peddie District

[Ritual] is less about giving voice to shared values than about opening fields of argument; about providing the terms and tropes, that is, through which people caught up in changing worlds may vex each other, question definitions of value, form alliances, and mobilize oppositions (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993: xxiii).

Introduction

My aim in this dissertation is to explore how cattle were practically and discursively enmeshed in the everyday livelihoods, accumulation strategies and domestic struggles of households in Peddie District. In the context of materially *building the homestead* in the otherwise asset-poor rural economy, holding cattle was a means by which rural people attempted to maximise their use of available physical (i.e. ecological and human), economic and, as I demonstrate in this chapter, cultural resources to advance their particular social projects.

Much of the work of rural, especially senior, men was aimed, directly and indirectly, at maintaining the enclaved position (or in Appadurai's [1986] terminology, to (re)construct and maintain limits on the 'commodity candidacy') of cattle. They sought to retain the position of cattle as goods that were regarded as symbolically crucial to the ritual well-being of the homestead and the wider community. In this chapter, I explore how especially the rurally resident male heads of cattle-holding households endorsed the use and exchange of cattle for consumption in ritual slaughter, within defined cultural norms. I show that it was by rhetorically and practically linking cattle to the key local projects of *ukwakh'umzi* [building the home] and *masincedisane* [let us help each other], especially by emphasising the 'homestead-strengthening' consumption of cattle in rituals, that senior men – and married or widowed women – sought to exercise some control over the increasingly differentiated, fragmented and fragile social and economic relationships at household and village levels (Ngwane 2003: 696; Kepe 2002b; Ntshona & Turner 2002).

Cattle-holding in rural Peddie District reflected the ever-widening differentials in material wealth between households. This made the use of cattle, in one of their remaining substantively cultural roles, i.e. in ritual slaughter, all the more pertinent. As Parkin (1980: 198) has pointed out, customary ritual practices can ‘mask...the development of inequality by communicating the opposite’. The economically levelling aspects of Xhosa ritual, in the sense that social categories such as clan membership, genealogical seniority, age, gender and commensality were emphasised over measures of social difference and economic class (although class differences were not entirely ignored nor transcended), provided a foil that at least partly negated local wealth differentials.

In the first section of this chapter, I review the varied nature of ritual practice in the Eastern Cape and in Peddie District specifically.¹ In particular, I review McAllister’s distinction between what he calls *ancestor or kinship* rituals on the one hand, and *beer drinks* on the other hand, in the context of Peddie District. The ancestor rituals that McAllister studied on the Willowvale coast of the former Transkei laid stress on atemporal, patrilineal kinship ties, whereas beer drinks emphasised territorial relations and co-operation between households. McAllister argued that this contrast was particularly strong because of the context of extensive inter-household economic co-operation, such as the ploughing companies and work parties that characterised this area of the rural Eastern Cape (McAllister 1997, 2001).

In the second section, I examine the rituals that were conducted in Hamburg and Loverstwit during my period of fieldwork. I consider which rituals were most frequently performed and why this should be so. In the interests of brevity, I have moved the ‘thick descriptions’ of funeral rituals and of the *ulwaluko* [male initiation] ritual to Appendix Eight. I have also had to move the section that deals with the financial costs associated with conducting different rituals to Appendix Eight.²

¹ McAllister (1980: 211) provides a useful explanation of what may be subsumed under the term ‘ritual practice’ among Xhosa-speakers in the rural Eastern Cape (see also Bell 1997).

² In this section of Appendix Eight, I examine the timing of major and smaller rituals, and show that, where possible, many households made use of the holiday periods to conduct ancestor rituals, when the villages were swollen by the return of town-based people. This was also the time when many of those employed got their ‘Christmas bonus’, which they used to cover the costs of the hosting rituals (Ngwane 2003). The timing maximised the material redistributive effects and delivered ‘social’ gains in prestige that were associated with hosting ritual events.

In the final section of this chapter, I explore the extent to which ritual practice in the rural Eastern Cape opened up social spaces for people to negotiate and contest local meanings that were dislocated (or indeed, became more entrenched inter-generationally) through the contingencies of long-term and long-distance migrancy, residential fluidity and urban-rural straddling (see McAllister 1980: 249-250; Ngwane 2003). I briefly consider the mechanisms which existed in all villages to distribute the relatively high costs associated with hosting rituals across local social networks. These mechanisms included local burial societies and buying clubs, that were mostly the preserve of women. These groups played an important role in building and maintaining relations between homesteads and wider kin in rural areas. In the case of better-resourced and better-educated households, these societies and clubs tended to straddle rural and urban areas, and constituted an important economic and social bridge between the rural village and the town (Bank 2002b; cf. Boissevain 1984).

While rituals underscored the position of the host homestead within the networks of kinship, reciprocity and social affiliation or social distance in the village, hosting a ritual was a finely balanced social performance that had to be carefully orchestrated to achieve its effects (see De Wet 1995b; cf. Hughes-Freeland & Crain 1998b; Crain 1998).

I conclude the chapter by restating the need to see cattle-holding in the reserve areas not as some residual activity that will disappear with further 'market integration', but in the context of the contemporary livelihood options, the social projects and the ritual practices which people in Peddie District and elsewhere in the Eastern Cape continued to invest with meaning in the present.

Ritual in the Eastern Cape: spatial variations on a theme

To analyse ritual practice in Peddie District, I take as my starting point McAllister's distinction between ancestor rituals and beer-drinks among Xhosa-speaking people (McAllister 1997). Based on more than 25 years of (intermittent) fieldwork conducted in the agriculturally active Shixini area of Willowvale District in the former Transkei, McAllister (2001: 183) argued that the ancestor rituals, significant elements of which were played out in the cattle byre of each *umzi*, were based on clan

and kinship ties. He claimed that these rituals ‘ha[d] little relevance for the nature of everyday social interaction...[and had] a relatively atemporal and formal character’ (see also McAllister 1997). Unlike beer drinks, these *ancestor* rituals had a fairly fixed structure in which oratory and a predetermined spatial sequence featured prominently so as to

stress genealogical order, the unity of the kin group and the relationship between living and dead, and [had] a timeless quality, largely unrelated to the actual process of everyday life, which [was] based on territorial relations and co-operation between neighbours (McAllister 2001: 183).

McAllister (1997: 282) also suggested that the oratory at these rituals not only ‘communicates information about the ritual, but also about values and norms, group boundaries, hierarchies [including gender hierarchies] and social distance, and degrees of inclusion and exclusion’. These rituals were concerned more with normative structural relationships and tended to exclude, or at least clearly delineate, non-kin who may nonetheless be important to the host homestead in everyday situations.

In contrast, beer drinks ‘differ[ed] from ancestor rituals...[especially with regard to] the active role of neighbours and local territorial groups’ in the ritual.³ It was these non-kin participants, McAllister argued, who were more important than kin and clanspeople in overcoming the practical problems of everyday rural life in Shixini, and this was what made beer drinks so interesting. He suggested that, in sharp contrast to ancestor rituals, beer drinks were fora for discussing community affairs, and as manifestations of the local community in action, they allowed for the expression of important social principles, including ‘locality, neighbourliness, co-operation, sharing and the interdependence of homesteads’ (McAllister 1997: 299, 303).

Why should this apparently sharp structural disjuncture between ancestor rituals and beer drinks have existed in people’s ritual practice in Shixini? McAllister argued that it had to do with the important change, since about the 1920s, in the ways in which the maintenance of local economic activity in Shixini had come to depend less on

³ McAllister’s doctoral thesis dealt in considerable detail with Xhosa beer drinks and their oratory (see McAllister 1986).

kinship and more on co-operative labour and the pooling of resources between neighbouring homesteads. It was the break-up of what were previously larger homesteads, coupled to the increase in labour migration, that made individual homesteads more dependent on others, especially on their immediate neighbours, for their economic survival (McAllister 1997: 296; Manona 1999).

McAllister quotes Salzman (1978) in pointing out that ‘culture always contains contradictions and alternatives, including organisational alternatives to currently operating forms, which may be activated as conditions change’, in order to explain what he saw as a more generalised transition from ancestor rituals to beer drinks that followed from a shift from kinship to neighbourhood and a sense of community as ‘the major organising principle’ (McAllister 1997: 305-6).⁴

When applied to the Peddie data, however, McAllister’s binary distinction between ancestor rituals (stressing the kin group) and beer drinks (emphasising the more economically significant, everyday relations based on neighbourhood) seems to work less well.⁵ Firstly, in relation to agrarian production, there appeared to be far less agrarian-based co-operation and interdependence between homesteads in rural Peddie District than McAllister found in Shixini. This related to the steady decline in agricultural activity, especially in field cultivation, in Peddie District since the 1950s and particularly since the mid-1970s. In fact, because of population pressure, the widespread landlessness among households and the degradation of arable lands, these lands, although underutilised, remained paradoxically highly contested in many villages in Peddie District (see Ainslie 1998; Mzozoyana 1995b).

In this regard, Hamburg was anomalous, partly because Hamburg previously had its own municipality and (some) households were allocated two-hectare plots of land, which were large enough to be subdivided for residential and arable purposes. In

⁴ Similarly, Bell (1997: 255) points out that ‘...[R]arely does a society have only one style or one worldview. Usually there are several different cosmological orders more or less integrated with each other but capable of tense differentiation and mutual opposition. Different parts of society – social classes, economic strata, or ethnic groups – may hold different perspectives on ritual, or the same subgroup may have different attitudes on different occasions (See also Moore 1986: 195ff).

⁵ Xhosa-speakers make a distinction between *amasiko* [pl. customs] – which include *umsebenzi* [lit. work or ritual] directed at the ancestors – and *imithetho* [pl. social rules of behaviour, laws] that are not necessarily religious, and which include social practices such as *ukuhlonipa* [to use the language and behaviour of avoidance and respect].

consequence, as many as 39% of the 254 homesteads in Hamburg village ploughed and planted their arable 'allotments' (often equivalent in size to a home garden) to maize, other fieldcrops (oats, legumes, etc.) and vegetables during the 2000/01 season. However, only a small number of these homesteads did so by participating in ploughing companies and other co-operative work parties. Some of these people, and others, also had small allotments in the Hamburg Community Garden where, although the Garden formed a contiguous enclosed area, they worked their allotments on an individual basis. Thus even in Hamburg, with its higher levels of agrarian activity, the tasks relating to cultivation were individualised and commoditised. Few homesteads practised forms of non-monetised exchange of factors of production, specifically *isahlulo* [share-cropping]. The majority of households paid to have their fields ploughed by ox or tractor-drawn plough. Where no money changed hands for ploughing and planting services, it was usually because the ploughing team included animals from that particular homestead's byre and/or the labour of male members of the households in question. Most people also paid for weeding services that were provided by women who, while they often worked in groups, were paid a daily rate on an individual basis.⁶

In Loverstwit, people's access to the potentially arable land (much of it still covered with thornbush and rocks) adjacent to the village was disputed with the neighbouring village of Tuku A. This meant that most of the homesteads in the village were reluctant to incur the capital outlay necessary to get arable land under crops. Where field cultivation did occur, informants made it clear that each household was expected to meet its own labour needs, or employ other people to help with production-related tasks. Labour was thus commoditised and no work-parties or co-operative ploughing teams were in evidence during the fieldwork period in Loverstwit.

As in Mooiplaas near East London, the emphasis in agrarian production in rural Peddie District has shifted in two respects (see Bank & Qambata 1999). Firstly, a shift had taken place to household autonomy, although not household self-sufficiency, in terms of engagement in productive activities. Most cultivation

⁶ There was some variation on providing them with meals (morning 'tea' and lunch) during the day, but several informants claimed that they had ended this practice as it was easily abused by workers who spent an inordinate amount of time eating and chatting rather than working.

occurred in the more private space of people's home-gardens, some of which were only just big enough to warrant ploughing with oxen or by tractor (cf. Bank 2002b: 637). Secondly, a more significant shift occurred in which most rural homesteads moved from being sites of productive agrarian activity to sites of consumption (Ainslie 1998; Ngwane 2003: 699). These two factors taken together meant that the beer drinks that were so vividly described by McAllister as an integral part of co-operative agrarian activities in Shixini were virtually non-existent in Peddie District at the time of my fieldwork.

A second significant difference when compared to Shixini, and allied to the decline in field-scale agricultural activity, was the fact that in Peddie District there was an earlier decline in the participation of men in classic long-distance migrant labour practices. This meant that men as household heads were either resident in the village or were relatively close at hand, being residents of towns and cities in the region. Unlike the many men (and women) in Shixini who continued to be employed as long-distance migrants in distant mines and urban centres, and who were thus still plugged into the migrant labour system, town-based Peddie people were less inclined to enter into formal arrangements with their neighbours and kinsmen to keep an eye on their homesteads, arable lands and livestock. This more local habitation, coupled to their considerable post-1994 reliance on the social welfare economy and the substantial out-migration by younger people to regional towns and cities, all fostered an emphasis on economic independence and autonomy at the household level, with negative implications for 'everyday' mutual assistance and reciprocity between households.

For village-based homesteads, there were powerful economic, cultural and social reasons for seeking to keep town-based household and lineage members involved in the affairs of the rural *umzi*. Ironically, the need for access to reliable information about employment in the less predictable unspecialised⁷ regional economy was actually greater for Peddie residents than it was for the long-distance migrants of Shixini, who could presumably rely on labour recruiters and especially their closer-knit 'home-boy' networks to keep them informed of potential employment

⁷ In the sense that one was not a mine-worker or an industrial worker but was reduced to the status of a general labourer, who was easily replaced.

opportunities in highly specific sectors of the economy, mainly on the mines and in industries.

Thirdly, it was worth noting that even within Peddie District there were notable differences in this regard. Hamburg – like Shixini – had a relatively stable population in terms of the proportion of lineages who had lived there and intermarried over at the past 50-60 years, albeit with in-migration of displaced farmworker families.⁸

Loverstwiist, by contrast, consisted of households which had all moved into the village in the past 10-15 years from various localities, although mostly from previously white-owned farms in this particular part of Peddie District. Many of the people I interviewed in Loverstwiist admitted to having moved there to escape the ‘family problems’ they had experienced in their home villages or farms. This meant that the social ties, including ties of marriage, between households in Loverstwiist were not as long-standing nor as overlapping as those in Hamburg.⁹ The consistently larger number of beer drinks hosted in Loverstwiist, compared to Hamburg (see below), may be seen as a way of, on the one hand, seeking to ensure ancestral sanction and support and, on the other hand, of emphasising and encouraging the desirable social characteristics of good neighbourliness and reciprocal assistance between households and lineages. In other words, precisely the values that, in a post-agrarian, dislocated community, could no longer be taken for granted, were the ones being enacted.

Fourthly, and as portrayed in the preceding chapters, economic downturn had had a differential impact on households in the villages of Peddie District. On the one hand, it had widened socio-economic differences between households in the villages and

⁸ For the current generation of young people getting married, it was clear that the more educated and employed were marrying people from outside Hamburg, while the less educated, where they were getting married at all, continued to marry locally. Although I did not examine this issue in detail, it seemed that intermarriage tended, at least in the past, to fall within discrete village sections.

⁹ This was reflected in the series of violent confrontations that rocked the village of Loverstwiist in 1996-1997, when four elderly women, accused of being witches responsible for the suspicious death of a ‘healthy’ young woman, were severely beaten by a group of (mostly) young men in the community and held hostage in a hut. They were finally persuaded, through the intercession of the police, to release the women. Witchcraft remained a serious concern for many people in the village, with the wealthiest man in the village having had his house burnt to the ground by lightning just prior to my period of fieldwork in the village. In 1999, dissatisfaction with the then village leadership led to the burning of four homes and the subsequent violent eviction of the leadership for the alleged theft of community funds, corruption and nepotism. These and other, similar episodes, although by no means unheard of in other villages, earned Loverstwiist a degree of notoriety in Peddie District (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 1999; Ashforth 1998).

put further pressure on the household economic independence that was a feature of people's livelihoods in rural Peddie District. This generated social tensions as poorer households applied moral pressure on wealthier households to assist them materially, principally by invoking the *masincedisane* norm. In Hamburg, these socio-economic cleavages appeared to be more marked¹⁰ than in Loverstwist, and this found expression in the relatively higher number of slaughter rituals – which on an individual basis had a higher redistributive effect than beer drinks – conducted by wealthier households in Hamburg. Not that beer drinks were unimportant in respect of supplementing people's diets. In both villages, there were a number of poorer people for whom survival from week to week was partly dependent on attending every beer drink held in the village, where they consumed significant amounts of nutritious *mqombothi* [home-brewed sorghum beer] and might be fortunate enough to be served a hearty meal.

Fifthly, although part of a long-standing pattern, the rise in the economic independence especially of younger, better-educated women since the 1980s, and that of elderly, women pensioners since the mid-1990s, threw gender and generational relations in the household and village, already troubled, into further disarray (cf. Mager 1992,1999; Ngwane 2003). This gave rise to tensions and disruptions in normative relations between differently situated people that were played out socially and economically and which required some form of public expression.

Given these different pressures on household and inter-household relations, it seems to me that current ritual practice in rural Peddie District, while rooted in older, more normative, cultural and ritual forms, needs to be conceptualised somewhat differently to ritual practice in Shixini. Unlike Shixini, where ritual served to re-affirm *existing* social relations that were in daily 'use', in places like Hamburg and Loverstwist, the need existed for regular opportunities to *enact* social relations between kin and between neighbours and other villagers, resident and absent from the village, that would build reciprocity and trust between *imizi* [homesteads]. Socially, ancestor rituals, beer drinks and other ceremonies in both villages were about making use of,

¹⁰ Mostly, I venture, because the community of Hamburg had been established much longer, giving homesteads with better-educated members ample time to accumulate resources, and thereby to compound the economic advantages they had over other, less upwardly-mobile households, with farmworker families grouped in the latter.

and in the process building and re-affirming, bonds of kinship, neighbourliness and reciprocity. But, unlike Shixini, it was the relative *absence* of other, overlapping relationships predicated on everyday co-operative, agrarian production and a residentially stable rural population that marked rituals as different in places like rural Peddie District. Here again, unlike in Shixini, different rituals were themselves harnessed to do the work of instructing a specially constituted population, that was ordinarily dislocated and fragmented, how they should act towards each other. Rituals also did the work of defining and redefining kinship, clanship, neighbourliness, in short, community, in relation to the past, the present and the future.

There is a further twist to this notion of 'ritual as work party'. As slaughter rituals became more elaborate and costly, it became necessary to engage other households in the preparations thereof. Both the costs and the labour required to host what many rural people regarded as important slaughter rituals were increasingly difficult for individual homesteads to manage alone. In the village context, this made the actual work of hosting rituals a necessarily co-operative undertaking by local and even town-based people, most of them women, who were assembled for the task of successfully planning and doing all the preparations for the ritual.

Stated differently, my contention is that, on the one hand, the very activities and processes involved in planning, organising and co-operating to successfully host a wide range of rituals – including ancestor rituals – were a key site for exploring and negotiating the moral and material relations and tensions within and between the diasporic homesteads in villages like Loverstwit and Hamburg (Ngwane 2003; Ngwenya 2002).¹¹ I contend that in rural Peddie District it was precisely the hosting of rituals, rather than co-operative agricultural production, that became the quintessential 'co-operative' work that people constituting dispersed rural and urban households shared.¹²

¹¹ Three other important sites were community meetings (including school meetings) and (denominational) church services and *oomanyano* (women's prayer groups), all of which generally involved, through processes of voluntary exclusion, only certain categories of people in the village.

¹² In this way, rituals may be considered a 'bridging arrangement' between rural and urban, such as 'cash down' bridewealth payments among the Pedi of Sekhukhuneland, that Sansom (1981: 98) suggests were key to 'communally contrived, communally recognised and communally backed guarantees of proper performance in the face of the tyranny of distanced separation'.

The frequent roping in of local kinswomen and neighbours from poorer households to help with the preparations for a ritual played an important role in both recognising and subverting economic (and class) distinctions between individuals and households. By enlisting the unpaid help of neighbours, it could be said that wealthier host *imizi* were exploiting their labour in pursuit of conspicuous consumption to the benefit of the host *umzi*. However, such co-operation also provided valuable opportunities for women not only to work together both intensively and on a relatively equal footing, but also afforded them opportunities, through their conversations and interactions over the course of several days, to exchange information, to discuss local problems and to mull over the stories and scandals that had come to light in other villages or in 'town'. In this way, they actively built common locally-informed understandings of social practice, while strengthening networks of mutual support across the real cleavages of socio-economic difference, both within the village and between town and village-based women. Thus ritual 'work parties' served as important sites of sociality by providing the space, especially for women, to socialise and to work together (cf. Hughes-Freeland & Crain 1998b: 6).

The presence and participation of other villagers at a ritual was no a small matter either. McAllister's (2001: 178-180) informants pointed out that 'it is pleasing to the ancestors for their descendants to 'build' the homestead in the economic sense, and it is clear that this would not be possible without relationships with [other] people.' Critically, other villagers were implicated in many of the ritual practices of each homestead in the village. Important to the success of the ritual were the contributions of alcohol and money from extended family members, *imigalelo* [rotating credit clubs] and, in the case of funerals, from burial societies.

A key principle with regard to the role of other villagers during rituals was that of *ukuzimasa* [to participate] and *ukungqina* [to witness], which means to endorse and legitimise the ritual by attending the ritual event, as well as by consuming some of the drink and food on offer. It involved listening to the host's explanation of what event had given rise to this ritual and giving a formal response to this explanation. This response was given by the most senior man present who was not related to the host *umzi*. Finally, it involved the commensality of every adult in the village being welcome to drink the home-brewed beer and brandy, and to eat the meat and other

food that was provided, in ways that were normatively ordered by conventions of gender and generational difference.

Through their attendance and participation, non-kin local people thus contributed to 'building the homestead' by recognising the host homestead (and its ancestors) as one of their own, legitimising its activities and paying witness to its ritual and moral projects (cf. Wilson *et al.* 1952: 206). For this reason, neighbours and other villagers were not expressly invited to a ritual. They were simply expected to attend. The offerings of *mqombothi* [sorghum beer] and meat, besides their ritual purpose, were a means of encouraging attendance by other people who were not involved in the work of organising and hosting the ritual. It was the attendance by large numbers of other people, especially members of 'respectable' local families and town-based people, that provided the 'noise' of many people socialising. This 'noise' was an indication of the status of the host *umzi* and showed the ancestors that the host homestead was being built by the entire village. By contrast, the clearest sign of a socially marginal homestead was the small number of people, and the virtual absence of non-kin people at the 'open' rituals (as opposed to 'family' rituals) they conducted.¹³

Ritual practice in Peddie District

The contemporary salience of ritual practice as people's central means of communicating with their patrilineal ancestors was everywhere apparent in rural Peddie District. The actual, often brief, communication with the ancestors in the byre could only be performed by the most senior man of the host agnatic cluster or if he was not available, by a next-most appropriate available senior man. Every homestead thus had one designated senior man who ideally officiated at all their rituals. A stand-in should be another senior agnatic relative but might also be simply a senior clansman, who was taken as a fictive lineage member on the basis of his clan affiliation to the host homestead (cf. Wilson *et al.* 1952: 64).

The reason why ancestor rituals were of particular analytical importance for my purposes was that they involved the use of cattle in re-enacting and contesting social values and cultural norms through the expression of an idealised 'Xhosa' identity. It

¹³ Some rituals, such as *imbeleko* [introducing a child to the ancestors], were regarded as family rituals and were usually only attended by close kin relatives.

was in ancestor rituals that the social authority of men was re-affirmed. It was also at these times that the roles of different categories of people (men, women, young and old, Christians and non-Christians) were most clearly delineated in relation to each other and any aberrations most clearly noticeable.

Schapera's observation, made some 70 years ago in respect of ancestor beliefs in Southern Africa, was that

[Ancestral spirits] were not regarded as omnipotent, but they took an active interest in the affairs of their own family and tribe, and without their guidance and help the living could not hope to flourish. They were held above all to be the guardians of the existing social order, the custodians of tradition, and, since to inaugurate new ways was a sure method of estranging and alienating them, they were a strong force for conservatism (Schapera 1934: 30).

To a considerable extent, notwithstanding the inroads made by nearly two centuries of Christian missionary work, this situation still pertained in rural Peddie District (see Mtuze 2003: 25,52). Many rural people, both men and women, relied on a range of rituals to genuinely pursue supernatural sanction from their patrilineal ancestors for the activities of their *umzi* and its members (Mtuze 2003: 50-51, 57; cf. Moore, S.F. 1996). By 'genuinely' I mean that their actions must be taken at face value and cannot be regarded as the products of a deliberate ideological mystification of everyday life and its ambiguities on the part of one section of rural Xhosa society over other sections (cf. Davis 1992). Nevertheless, of course, power was exercised here, particularly in the taking up of normative gender and generational roles, the positioning in space of different social categories of people and the allocations of meat, brandy and *mqombothi* to these different categories, during the hosting of a ritual event. Since each slaughter ritual must be sanctioned by the ancestors, which was signalled by the bellowing of the sacrificial beast just before it was killed, every ritual provided a potentially dramatic arena for social contestation. The ever-present threat that the beast would not bellow, because the ancestors were unhappy about something or someone's behaviour, would stop the ritual in its tracks. This threat provided the space for certain categories of people to attempt to dominate others through selectively updated yet culturally potent interpretations and re-enactments of 'traditional' ritual practice (cf. McAllister 1980: 248).

Indeed, rituals were used and thought of in what appear to be rather instrumental ways by many of the rural people I interviewed. This pragmatism worked at various levels. Firstly, the widely held belief in the active interest and intervention in one's life of the ancestors or, in the case of many Christians, both of the Christian deity and the ancestors, was put forward as the fundamental reason for conducting rituals. My informants emphasised the express need to host rituals at the rural *umzi* as a means of ensuring supernatural support for *building the home* in a material and moral sense. *Building the home* was achieved, on the one hand, by appeasing the ancestors (the living-dead) who, from beyond the grave, continued to have expectations of the living. These expectations were made known when particular ancestors appeared in the dreams of living members of the *umzi*. In these dreams, the ancestor expressed his or her displeasure at the fact that a particular ritual had not been conducted or simply indicated that he or she was 'thirsty' for *mqombothi*. This obliged the members of the *umzi* to spread the word, to muster their resources, to organise and finally to conduct the required ritual, which might be a simple and relatively inexpensive beer drink or a costly gift of an ox to a deceased grandfather.

Moreover, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, *building the home* in a resource-poor rural environment requires the continued flow and investment of material resources, people and information from town to rural villages. The sprucing-up of the homestead (additional building, renovating and painting) prior to a ritual was a clear expression of this investment. *Building the home* also required maintaining relationships between kin and wider social networks between town and country, thereby ensuring that one's rituals were well-attended.

Thirdly, in the context of the village, *building the home* required engaging one's neighbours in co-operative projects. This was because Xhosa people say that '*Akukho siko elinakho kuqhubeka abantu bengekho*' [there have to be people present to perform a custom, i.e. ritual].¹⁴ These days, such projects placed an emphasis on the display, sharing and highly repetitive consumption of the same, specified material resources. As recurring consumption events, rituals fulfilled this role well. The shared consumption of the meat of slaughtered animals, the preparation and sharing of other

¹⁴ This is as true today as when it was noted by Mills in Wilson *et al.* (1952: 206).

foodstuffs and the consumption of home-brewed beer and brandy all facilitated the commensality and co-operation that were required to lubricate social relations in the village context.

During the course of my fieldwork, it became clear that a significant number of homesteads in Hamburg and Loverstwist were involved in conducting or materially supporting a wide range of rituals in their respective villages and beyond. Many of these rituals exhibited a dominant Christian character, but some indicated the continued relevance of ancestor veneration (Mtuze 2003: 84; cf. Pauw 1974: 433,436-7).¹⁵ The only households that seldom conducted rituals – other than funerals – were those in the ‘very poor’ category.¹⁶

The rituals that people performed included the slaughter rituals that marked rites of passage or stages in the life-cycle of individuals, and beer-drinks through which people communicated with their ancestors, marked transitions in their life-cycles, or ‘just socialised’ with their neighbours.¹⁷ Other ‘feasts’ and ceremonies, such as weddings, graduation parties and the unveiling of tombstones, were generally the preserve of a far smaller group of wealthier households. Here, the norm was to slaughter a cow or ox (and sometimes one or more sheep), but without making explicit any ritual communication with the patrilineal ancestors. While they were not strictly ancestor rituals, these ceremonies nevertheless followed much the same

¹⁵ I am not concerned here with this interesting aspect of rituals, namely to analyse the extent to which they may best be seen as Christian, ‘traditional’ (a distinction that is analogous with the so-called ‘Red vs. School’ division) or hybridised forms of these two (cf. Mtuze 2003; Mayer & Mayer 1971; Gitywa 1976: 141ff; Mafeje 1963; Wilson *et al* 1952: 129ff,197). Pauw (1974: 437-8) discusses the complementarity, or at least, the lack of conceptual conflict, that existed between Christian and ‘traditional’ religious/ritual practices. Because of space constraints, I acknowledge but am also not able to explore the distinctions that exist between nominally Mfengu and Xhosa ways of conducting rituals (but see Raum & De Jager 1972).

¹⁶ See the *Daily Dispatch* article of 6 September 2003, ‘*Poor families spending a fortune on lavish funerals*’. The article details the ‘enormous pressure’ that families faced ‘to give their loved ones a decent send-off... Two new studies revealed that low income families were splurging an average of three-and-a-half times their total monthly incomes on funerals’. *The Sunday Times* of 31 August 2003 quoted one Port Elizabeth undertaker as saying, ‘In years past, you would never see bereaved families hiring tents and stoves and portable toilets at their private homes – this is a new trend which is an enormous financial burden’.

¹⁷ Hammond-Tooke (1985: 55) introduces a distinction between the ‘invocation’ and ‘supplication’ of the ancestors that occurs in different rituals. ‘Invocation’, he suggests, refers to those situations where people merely call ‘on the ancestors to be present’, while ‘supplication’ refers to those rituals in which the ‘troubling’ ancestor is referred to by name, the reasons for the ritual are explained, and the ancestral spirits are informed that ‘such-and-such is being done to put things right’. Neither of these categories deals with the phenomenon of beer-drinks as mostly social occasions.

pattern, in terms of a gendered and generational mobilisation and division of labour during the preparatory performative and consumption phases of the ritual.

It is worth noting that not all rituals required that cattle specifically be slaughtered in order to communicate with the ancestors. In fact, some rituals, such as *imbeleko* [introducing a child to the ancestors] or *ukojisa* [see below] required the slaughter of a goat, rather than a cow or ox, with or without the consumption of *mqombothi* [home-brewed sorghum beer] and brandy.

The ancestors were believed to reside in the byre, more specifically in the area directly across from the entrance and at the gate of the byre. Thus where a ritual was directed at the ancestors, the byre itself was the key site for conducting the ritual. However, only men and patrilineally related women of the host *umzi* were permitted to enter the byre during the invocation of the ancestors. In the course of conducting an ancestor ritual, the officiating senior man would pour a tot of brandy and some *mqombothi* on the ground inside the byre, ceremonially sharing them with the ancestors. Sometimes the animal was ritually slaughtered in the byre in a prescribed manner, on the afternoon prior to the ‘main day’ of the ritual event. Often, it was slaughtered on the morning of the ritual. It was tied by a leather thong to the *ixhanti* [the post in the middle of the byre], where it was introduced to the ancestors before being thrown onto its left side by several young men of the agnatic cluster. The animal was ritually prodded and then, if it bellowed, killed by the *intlabi* using the *umkhonto wekhaya* [the spear of the home]. The *intlabi* was the male head of the host *umzi* or his especially designated patrilineal relative. The animal was killed by having its spinal cord severed by the insertion of the spear or a large knife in the neck. Young men had the task of gathering up the blood from the wound in a big enamel bowl to be mixed with fat, cooked and consumed later by the men and boys present. The young men also assisted with skinning the animal and, using axes and knives, carved up the carcass in the prescribed manner. If slaughtered the day before (as was the norm), the meat from the animal was stored overnight in the ritual *rontawu* (or great hut) of the homestead, where the ancestors might partake of it (see Hammond-Tooke 1974c: 333; McAllister 1980). The following day, most of the meat of the slaughtered animal was boiled and specific parts of the animal were apportioned in culturally prescribed ways (which might differ from clan to clan) to patrilineal kin,

senior men, senior women, and younger men and women (cf. Gitywa 1976: 179). This apportionment was overseen by a senior man known as the *injoli* who ensured that each designated social category, and village section where relevant, was adequately catered for. At the women's cooking area behind the main house, the host's wife or someone designated by her played the role of *injoli* for the women.

Some commentators have argued that, given the economic constraints many people face, goats were 'replacing cattle' as the key means of communicating with the ancestors (Steyn 1988: 379; William Beinart, personal communication).¹⁸ However, my informants were clear that certain *ancestor* rituals required the slaughter of an ox or cow, with little room for substitution in this regard (cf. McAllister 2001: 45). In fact, the cost of buying the ox or cow that was required for a slaughter ritual was one of the main reasons that people gave for not being in a position to conduct certain rituals. In other words, they would rather risk the displeasure of their ancestors at the undue delay in conducting these rituals than use a ritually less efficacious animal (for example, a goat) that would also risk undermining the status of their *umzi* in the village (Wilson *et al.* 1952: 197). Since, in many of the cases of rituals I recorded, the most common reason given for slaughtering an animal was 'to feed the people present' rather than to ritually slaughter the appropriate animal for the ancestors, slaughtering an ox or a cow rather than one or more goats or sheep was more efficient and, since it cost more to buy, also conferred more status on the host *umzi*.

None of the above should be taken to suggest that ritual slaughter among Xhosa-speaking rural people was timeless and unchanging since, as I have argued above, it clearly was not (Wilson 1978). Indeed, ritual hybridisation and innovation, as well as contingent adjustments, were all in evidence here (Mtuze 2003: 88ff). McAllister (1997: 306) argued that in Shixini a number of ancestor rituals that formerly involved

¹⁸ See Soga (1932: 241) with regard to ritual slaughter in the celebration of marriages: 'With poorer individuals there is less display and extravagance; sheep and goats take the place of slaughter cattle in the festivities.' Elsewhere, however, Soga (1932: 158) mentions that, in the case of an ill person, 'the spirits will not be satisfied until the particular animal [whether cow, goat or sheep] originally mentioned [by the diviner] has been offered as a sacrifice'; see also Soga (1932: 250). Brown (1971: 180) suggested that goats are considered by Xhosa-speakers to be less efficacious in placating the ancestral spirits than cattle. Bührmann (1984: 83) noted that during the initiation of Xhosa diviners, to have a goat instead of a cow slaughtered during the final *godusa* [taking home] ritual was regarded as 'slightly inferior and to be "godusa-ed by the bok [goat]" implies some kind of stigma'. (See also Bührmann 1984: 88; Hunter 1936: 71).

ritual slaughter have been replaced by beer drinks, just as beer appeared, during much earlier times, to have replaced milk as a ritual beverage.¹⁹ McAllister's fascinating study of the change from the *umhlinzeko* [ox slaughter] ritual which had been replaced by the *umsindleko* beerdrink in Shixini in the context of ritually reincorporating a migrant worker into his home community is an excellent example of this change in ritual practice over time (McAllister 1981,1985).²⁰

Several of my informants indicated that, as long as the ancestors were told, during the *ukungxengxeza* part²¹ of a ritual, about the reasons why a goat instead of an ox or a cow was being slaughtered, then they (the ancestors) would not object to the use of a goat. Similarly, if an appropriate animal was not available in the byre of the homestead, an animal would have to be purchased for the purposes of ritual slaughter. On such occasions it was enough for the purchased animal to spend one night in the byre and for the officiating man to simply explain to the ancestors that there was no suitable animal in the byre, and that this required the family to purchase the animal that was about to be slaughtered, and to indicate where this animal, which he should know the name of (alternatively, it must be given a name), comes from. In this way, the actual performance of normative ritual practices was adapted to what was affordable and manageable at the current time.

Furthermore, most rural people readily accepted that different clans and families had slightly different ritual practices and ways of conducting what was a common set of rituals. There was no textbook which listed the precise procedures that should be followed during the conducting of rituals. Rather, older people (especially older men) were the repositories of knowledge about how the family rituals should be conducted. Each agnatic cluster had a senior man who was usually called upon to officiate at the

¹⁹ McAllister (2001: 149) refers to religious 'events held as a substitute for a ritual killing of an ox or goat, such as when beer is brewed to 'make known the homestead' (*ukwazisa'mzi*).'

²⁰ In respect to the dynamic nature of rituals in the Ciskei reserves of the early 1970s, Gitywa (1976: 141) pointed out that '[p]assing through the various standards at the primary school level is marked by the killing of a chicken; the passing of Standard Six calls for the slaughtering of a sheep or a goat. In both instances, the affair is a closed one, concerning only the members of the immediate family. Success at the Junior or Senior Certificate level [also involves] the slaughter of a sheep or goat. The attainment of a university degree is an important achievement for which a beast is slaughtered as soon as possible after graduation.' As Bell (1997: 256) suggests, what people do ritually and regard as tradition is 'usually a rather new synthesis of custom and accommodation.'

²¹ Literally, to say sorry; this was the part of the ritual when a speech was made in the byre to explain to the ancestors the reason(s) why the ritual was being conducted.

rituals conducted by the homesteads in this cluster. This man, and other senior patrilineally related men and women, were often concerned that the ritual procedures of this particular agnatic cluster were followed as closely as possible.²² Where the actual practices of necessity deviated from this norm, most people expressed confidence that their ancestors, who experienced similar contingencies (for example cash shortfalls) during their lifetimes, would understand and empathise with their predicament. Indeed, this was confirmed, I was told, by the bellowing of the ox or cow before it was slaughtered, which indicated that the ancestors were satisfied with the proceedings and, in particular, with the explanation provided to them in the byre for why the ritual was being conducted.

The most important of the ancestor rituals, from the point of view of my informants (both men and women) in Loverstwest and Hamburg, were mortuary rituals. Besides the actual funeral, the two main mortuary rituals that involved the ancestors were *ukukhapa* [to accompany] and *ukubuyisa* [to bring home]. Both of these related to the death of the male – and only the male – homestead head and were generally not openly conducted by Christian families.²³

The *ukukhapa* ritual specifically required the slaughter of an ox on the day of the funeral to accompany the spirit of the homestead head, while the *ukubuyisa* ritual, which followed roughly one year later, also required slaughtering an ox. The *ukubuyisa* ritual was meant to bring home the spirit of the deceased to reside in the byre of the *umzi* and to preside over the fortunes of the homestead (see Hammond-Tooke 1974c: 328).²⁴ Both involved the home-brewing of *mqombothi* and the consumption of brandy.

²² Wilson (1978: 158) notes that '[A]mong Xhosa-speakers generally, enormous stress was laid on following traditional custom in every detail in rituals directed to the shades [ancestors]. Variations between lineages were acknowledged...But the efficacy of the ritual was held to depend upon following precisely the traditional form, for the shades themselves watched over and prized traditional custom.'

²³ Mtuze (2003: 64) notes that 'when the missionaries went further to condemn and excommunicate any of their members for performing certain rituals, such as *ukukhapa*...and *ukubuyisa*..., they dealt a death blow to the very essence of African life and religion. The rituals are a *sine qua non* for harmony, order and peaceful coexistence between the living-dead and the living.' Raum and De Jager (1972: 176ff) point out, however, that the majority of their informants were performing both these rituals in the mid-1960s.

²⁴ This was the normative procedure which did not always play itself out, even in the non-Christian *imizi*. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, many people had insufficient funds to cover the costs of slaughtering two beasts and thus of hosting a ritual of this nature. This caused the ritual to be

A third important ritual during which a beast was slaughtered was the *ukupha* [to give] ritual, where an ox or cow was slaughtered as a 'gift' to a deceased father or grandfather. A variation of this was the *ukupha umama inkobe* [to give mother a gift of maize], which some informants suggested may include the slaughter of a cow, but more typically involved only the brewing of *mqombothi* and the consumption of brandy.

Other 'piacular' rituals that involved propitiating the ancestors in times of distress might also require the slaughtering of a cow or ox, although substitution with a goat, as directed by an *igqira* [diviner], was more common here. These rituals were often done at the behest of *amagqirha* [diviners] who had been consulted in connection with a specific problem (which often presents with physical symptoms and afflictions) experienced by a member or members of the household (Hirst 1997). In several cases, particularly among wealthier Christian families, cattle (and sheep) were slaughtered at funerals, graduation parties and weddings to 'feed people', i.e. without an express invocation of the ancestors. This bore testimony to the ways in which people ostensibly continued to follow their customary practices, i.e. they ritually slaughtered cattle to mark changes in status and the like, but used different idioms to rationalise these practices to themselves and others (cf. Raum & De Jager 1972: 183). I now turn to examine rituals in Hamburg in more detail.

Conducting rituals in Hamburg

More than 103 separate rituals and ceremonies were held in Hamburg village during the 12-month-period November 2000 to October 2001.²⁵ These rituals and ceremonial functions ranged from only brewing *mqombothi* [home-brewed sorghum beer] to the slaughter of an animal, the provision of *mqombothi*, brandy and other food. Certain rituals had the appearance of discrete occasions, but were linked to other rituals that had been conducted before and still other rituals that were scheduled to follow. The rituals conducted in Hamburg included 28 different types of ritual (or distinct phases of a 'multi-stage' ritual), with the most commonly held ancestor rituals centred on the complex of mortuary rites, including *imingcwabo* [funerals], and the *ukukhapa* and

delayed, sometimes for several years or even longer. Secondly, the households that were headed by unmarried women did not conform to the patrilineal model since they did not have a male household head who became an ancestor upon death.

²⁵ Hamburg had 245 occupied households at the time. Since part of these data relied on the recollections of my informants, it is likely that a few rituals were not recorded.

ukubuyisa ancestor rituals (see Mtuze 2003: 25). Other rituals that were part of this complex were *ukutshayeleva inkundla* [to sweep the courtyard] ritual, *ukunxiba/ukukulula izila* [to wear/remove mourning], and *ukucitha impahla* [to disperse the clothes of the deceased]. These various rituals associated with mortuary rites took place on 29 different occasions during the 12-month period.

Other frequently conducted rituals included the complex of rituals associated with *ulwaluko* [male initiation rites], including *umngcamo* [preparation], *umshwamo* or *ukojisa* [partaking of the special portion of meat, in this case, from a goat slaughtered for the initiate after seven days spent in seclusion] and *umgidi* [celebration to mark the return of the ‘new men’]. Wherever material circumstances allowed for it, these rituals involved the slaughter of cattle and/or goats (20 cases). Hosting a ritual called *mqombothi/intselo* [beer for the ancestors] occurred on 16 different occasions while the *imbeleko* [introducing a child to the ancestors] rituals, which also involved the slaughter of a goat, took place on eight separate occasions.

As mentioned above, *imbeleko* [introducing a child to the ancestors] was a ‘family ritual’ that only involved the agnatic (and sometimes affinal) kin and not the whole community. Other rituals, which usually involved only the brewing of *mqombothi* and the consumption of brandy, included *ukuphuma* [to come out, to graduate], which informed the wider community about a particular person’s change in social status, *ukwazisa* [to make known] a new home to the ancestors and community, *ukuvula’ mzi* [to open a new home], *umtshato* and *umendo* [wedding ceremonies] and *ukucitha iintsimbi* [to cast aside the beads of an ancestor who was a diviner].²⁶

In 43 cases out of the 103 rituals I recorded, the ritual consisted only of the provision of *mqombothi* and brandy (and generally some bottled ‘SAB’ [South African Breweries] lager as well). In other words, around 42% of all the rituals did not involve the slaughter of an animal. Table 8.1 provides a list of the rituals that people

²⁶ One example of the *ukucitha iintsimbi* ritual in Hamburg involved the ritual slaughter of a goat for *ukutshayeleva* [to sweep the courtyard] and the subsequent slaughter of a cow, as required by the officiating *amagqirha* [diviners], while in another, somewhat different case, known as *ukuvasa iintsimbi*, the affected homestead (in which the widowed household head was herself an *igqirha*) was only required to make *mqombothi* and also supplied bottled beer and gin.

conducted where they only brewed *mqombothi* and the reasons for performing these rituals.

Table 8.1. Reasons for conducting beer drinks in Hamburg (n=43).

Name/Reason for ritual	No. of rituals	%
<i>Intselo</i> (beer for the ancestors or for living relatives)	16	37
<i>Ulwaluko</i> (beer relating to the male initiation ritual)	7	16
<i>Ukukulula izila</i> (beer to 'release mourning' after funeral)	5	12
<i>Ukuphuma</i> (beer for changing one's social status)	4	9
<i>Ukuzazisa/ukuvula'mzi</i> (beer for a new home)	4	9
<i>Ukuvasa izitya</i> (beer to commence/end a slaughter ritual)	2	5
Other	5	12
TOTAL	43	100

The fact that a broad range of households, wealthy and poorer ones, younger and older, as well as those whose members professed to be Christian of one denomination²⁷ or another, conducted beer drinks and/or ancestor slaughter rituals for various reasons during this period indicated the extent to which rituals remained a part of contemporary Xhosa lifestyles in the rural Eastern Cape. However, not every household conducted a ritual during the course of the year in question. In fact, since some rituals commonly take place in succession, in a number of instances it was the same subset of households that were responsible for organising a particular sequence of rituals that were explicitly linked to their own preceding ritual.²⁸ Except for rituals relating to male initiation where different homesteads may share the cost, venue and the preparation of food and beer, rituals were always conducted by specific homesteads and lineages rather than jointly between discrete and unrelated homesteads. In this sense, agnatic clusters and homesteads 'do their own ritual thing', although, as noted above, unrelated women may be roped in to assist with the preparation of food and *mqombothi*.

Because of my interest in the contemporary role of cattle in the lifestyles of 'rural' Xhosa-speakers, I considered both the main rituals that regularly involved the ritual

²⁷ There were many churches represented in Hamburg; prominent among these were the Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E), Bantu Church of Christ, Seventh Day Adventist and a number of other 'African independent' churches.

²⁸ Given the cost of rituals, there was a correlation between the frequency with which a homestead hosted rituals and their economic standing.

slaughter of cattle, and other occasions at which cattle were slaughtered non-ritually.²⁹ I remind the reader that the descriptions of two funerals and a male initiation ritual, which are not essential to my argument here, have been moved to Appendix Eight.³⁰

People in rural Peddie District, as elsewhere in rural South Africa, placed great emphasis on mortuary rituals, whether these were done in terms of Christian burials or more 'traditional' Xhosa burial rites, or commonly as a hybrid of these two forms. Funerals were important social occasions and people attended from far and wide. The funeral of an elderly person from a well-known family might be attended by several hundred people and involve considerable expense for the bereaved family. This has given rise to an industry in which funeral policies and membership of local burial societies, that provided financial support to the bereaved household, featured prominently in the livelihood decisions and social activities of many households.

There was a widespread preference for burying deceased family members – except married women – in their home villages wherever this was possible and practicable, even if they had spent most of their adult lives living away from the village. The village was where their ancestors were believed to reside, specifically in the byre of their home *umzi*, and this was where their cultural roots were. This practice made funerals an especially important element in the transfer of building materials, foodstuffs and money from towns to the countryside and gave cause for the movement of large numbers of people between town and countryside every weekend.

Of the 29 rituals conducted in Hamburg at which at least one cow or ox was slaughtered during the 12-month period in question, 14 (or 48%) involved mortuary rituals. Nine of the 14 mortuary rituals were funerals, comprising a Christian service, with a cow or ox slaughtered on the pretext of 'feeding the mourners' present. On two separate occasions, two cows were slaughtered for this purpose, such were the

²⁹ Over a weekend in April 2001, Mr. Somana, the leader of a Zionist church, hosted members of his church for a conference in Hamburg. Somana slaughtered a cow to feed the visitors who came from as far as Port Elizabeth over the course of the weekend.

³⁰ There were other rituals conducted in Hamburg which included slaughtering a cow or ox. These included *ukuvula umzi* (on two separate occasions), *ukupha* [to give the ancestors a gift], *ukuphuma*, *ukucitha iintsimbi* and a wedding (at which two cattle were slaughtered). In May 2001, the Madyongo household slaughtered their *inkomo yekhaya* [the cow of the home], because it had become too old, in a ritual known as *ukugugisa*.

numbers of people who attended the funeral. Seven of the nine funerals held over the period recorded were to bury elderly women and only two were for men (one of these was a man in his early forties). The remaining five rituals that involved slaughtering an ox comprised the ancestor rituals, *ukukhapa* (two occasions) and *ukubuyisa* (three occasions), which were hosted by widows for their deceased husbands.

Rituals in Loverstwist

My fieldwork in Loverstwist was limited to a three-month period, from September to November 2000. I was only able to record rituals conducted in Loverstwist for the eight-month period April to November 2001, with the longest part of this period served only by the recollections of my informants about the rituals that they had performed during this period. This record thus represents a partial account of the rituals conducted there during the calendar year, as many of the slaughter rituals – except those associated with funerals (as these obviously occur at random) – take place during the Easter holiday period in March and also during December, when male circumcision and other rituals take centre stage.

With the help of a research assistant, Sakhumzi Skina, I was able to record a total of 50 rituals that were held in the village during the eight-month period. These included a number of beer drinks and slaughter rituals. Given that there were 134 occupied homesteads at the time, this suggests that roughly one-third (37%) of the homesteads in the village conducted a ritual during this time. In Hamburg, the equivalent proportion of homesteads conducting rituals during a twelve-month period was 43%.

In all, 26 different kinds of ritual were conducted. Twenty-three rituals (46% of the total) involved the ritual slaughter of one or more animals. As with Hamburg, the mortuary rituals were among the most expensive and elaborate of the rituals performed in the village. There were seven funerals during this time. The other mortuary rituals performed included three *ukucela ityiwa* [to ask for salt] rituals, one *ukukulula izila* [to release the mourners] ritual and one *ukubuyisa* ritual.

The logic of rituals

It was particularly in the course of planning and performing rituals that contested social constructs were mobilized in socially and culturally charged effort to 'naturalise certain patterns of social divisions over other possible ones' (Ngwane 2003: 684; cf. Robins 1997). This was because rituals provided an especially potent context for different people to act 'experimentally' to either re-enact normative traditional practices or to contest or subvert the contemporary relevance or authenticity of these practices (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993: xxx; Moore 1986). In Peddie District too, the range of rituals that people performed variously provide rural residents with opportunities to contest social hierarchies, to display socio-economic differences and to test, rework or even transform local power (including intra-household) relations.

Hosting a ritual, especially one which explicitly invoked the ancestors, acted as a rallying call for the extended patrilineally related kin group. Family members, no matter how geographically dispersed, ignored this call to assist and to participate at their peril. Performing a ritual allowed for assessments of where the often dispersed members of this 'agnatic cluster' currently stood in relation to each other, socially and economically. In the process, social constructs that were mobilised during ritual practice included notions about the nature of the 'family', 'tradition' and 'home', and associated expectations of appropriate behaviour and support on the part of the individuals or groups that were variously delineated by these constructs (Ngwane 2003).

Indeed, many of the rituals in Loverstwest and Hamburg seemed to be about the constant striving of individuals and households (and their close kin) to make sense of, to regularise or to improve their social and economic situation in a time of seemingly growing uncertainty. This they attempted to do through their invocation of their ancestors, in their stylized communication with their resident and dispersed kin-group and their fellow-villagers, and their specific manipulations of space during ritual formalities (McAllister 1997: 293ff; Kuckertz 1997; Bank 2002b: 645). Not surprisingly, perhaps, two main fault-lines of these processes of 'regularisation through ritual' that I discerned were those of gender and generation.

I found that strict adherence to a gender division of labour in the preparation and performance of rituals remained common in both Hamburg and Loverstwiist. Moreover, a consistent regulation of space during all rituals, in the sense of a policing of which people were occupying what spaces, was a feature of this 'enactment of power'. In this regard, Moore (1986: 89) has pointed out that 'spatial representations...are active instruments in the production and reproduction of the social order.' Differentiation in terms of occupation of spaces during rituals in rural Peddie District was done on the basis of kinship, affiliation to the homestead conducting the ritual, age and gender (cf. McAllister 1997). Senior men, for instance, consistently dominated all the speeches given during rituals. Speakers always stood to address those present, while everyone else in the byre or *rontawu* was supposed to be seated. Where a man who was not the oldest non-kin man rose to respond to a speech, he would be admonished and told to sit down. I was told that young men may not sit near or drink with their fathers at rituals. The youngest man present had to surrender his seat immediately when an older man entered the byre or beer drink venue, or find himself berated by the other men present. All other men younger than the person entering had to shuffle along to make available an appropriate place, gauged in terms of his position in the age-ranking system, to the newcomer. In the cattle byre, members of the agnatic cluster hosting the ritual and their fellow clansmen sat to the right of the byre entrance while other men sat to the left. At an indoor beer drink, men were always seated on the right and the women on the left, as seen facing into the *rontawu*.

The same principle applied to the seating arrangements of women which also followed generational seniority, although women often sat on their mats on the floor. Women were not allowed into the byre during a ritual, except if they were 'daughters' of the host family. No *amankazana* [unmarried mothers] were supposed to attend a beer drink, unless they were older women (younger *amankazana* did attend, of course, but were expected to stay out of view). I was told that women were not allowed to stay indoors once the meat had been cooked and served at a slaughter ritual. Instead, they had to congregate outside in the courtyard, where they would eat their food.

Young boys of around 14-15 years of age could enter the byre during a slaughter ritual to claim the tail of an ox or cow, and to cook bits of meat over the open flames

of the fire. But they had to hover there as unobtrusively as possible, or risk being chased out by older men, especially if the byre was full of men. They would be summoned by older men and given a piece of meat. The division of brandy, *mqombothi* and beer, as well as meat, was done on the basis of age and gender. *Amaxhego* [old men] got the biggest share of the available brandy and *mqombothi*. In general, *abafazi* [women] were treated as an undifferentiated group in the first instance, when these allocations were made. Senior women would then oversee the allocations among the different age categories of women present.

But slippages in this 'ritualised enactment of power' were also apparent. Young men would often move to a different room or flat on the same property, away from the attentions of their fathers and senior kinsmen, to consume their share of the *mqombothi*, brandy and bottled beer. By removing themselves from the site of the ritual, they were also circumventing the scrutiny of their every move by the senior men.

On a few occasions, I noticed that unmarried girls were allocated a bottle or two of brandy or gin to share among themselves. They were required to consume this share discreetly, behind the main house and without inconveniencing the women working or drawing undue attention from any of the men. The reason that they were given some alcohol, I was told, was that they might refuse to attend rituals if their requests for alcohol were ignored.

Imigalelo [rotating credit] clubs, that were virtually the exclusive preserve of women, were prominent during particular phases of the some rituals. Furthermore, my data on the rituals conducted in both villages indicate that younger employed women were instigating many rituals by, for example, dreaming of their ancestors who claimed to be thirsty, or by organising a beer drink to thank their ancestors for assisting them in finding employment. Once their families had agreed to host a ritual, these women would often take the lead in the preparations and purchases for and the hosting of the subsequent rituals (especially beer drinks, but also slaughter rituals). They only deferred to a male relative to satisfy the requirement that a senior man should conduct the ancestral invocation and communicate with the people assembled for the ritual. Bank (2002b: 648), working in Mooiplaas Location near East London, has argued that, by taking the lead in ritual and custom, '[Xhosa] women are seeking to

authenticate their new-found material power by embedding it in a deeper set of meanings, values and activities that increasingly locate [these women] at the social centre of the community’.

Conclusion

To conclude I suggest that, in spite (or perhaps because) of widening socio-economic differences and economic uncertainty both within the village and between town and country, rural people’s commitment to conducting a wide range of rituals (including beer drinks) appeared to be virtually unassailable for the foreseeable future. This was so even where certain categories of household did not have the appropriate livestock necessary for slaughter rituals, or where they experienced financial difficulties in purchasing a beast for ritual purposes within the culturally appropriate time-frames. The centrality of ritual was no less real in cases where, for religious reasons, homesteads with a predominantly Christian identity claimed to be slaughtering a beast ‘just to feed the people’ and not for reasons of ancestor veneration.

Town-based *umzi* members were by no means reluctant participants in village-centred ritual practice. Many continued to identify strongly with their *umzi* and to value highly their association with their home village as a whole. This was demonstrated through their visits and their material contributions to their rural homes. The hosting of rituals in rural ‘home’ villages thus emerged as an important and potent mechanism for ensuring these flows of resources and maintaining the relationships between widely dispersed people.

My own data lead me to qualify Bank’s finding on the growing role of women in ritual in two important ways. It is clear that his argument best applies to *some* women, and in relation to *certain aspects and types* of ritual practice. My first concern is that we should not lump all women together, as this would downplay or ignore important social differences that exist between women, such as age, marital status, kinship affiliation in relation to the ritual at hand, their place of residence (rural or urban) or social standing in other ways. Similarly, economic standing, centred on educational and employment status, and religious affiliation, were important in plotting the different roles that women were able to take up in the context of ritual and social life more generally. A

weakness of Bank's portrayal of social and ritual change in Mooiplaas is its failure to clearly delineate and assess the different trajectories of change and upward mobility between women.

My second concern is that we should continue to make analytical distinctions between the wide variety of ritual practices of rural Xhosa-speaking people. McAllister has attempted to show the relevance of this approach to understanding the changes that have occurred over time in the way different rituals were conducted in Shixini (McAllister 1980,1997).³¹ This type of analysis is only possible with long-term fieldwork in the same locality. Making analytical distinctions, informed by the perspectives and insights of a range of informants, between different rituals, may allow us to establish the extent to which continuities characterise the performance of certain rituals. It would also allow us to better understand how changes in gender relations may affect the precise nature and frequency of particular types of rituals.

I have explored the interwoven nature of cattle-holding, male (patriarchal) identity and rural livelihoods in the context of ritual practices at the homestead and village level. Precisely because the slaughter of cattle was not an everyday occurrence, it was able to sustain its iconic status at the core of this interwoven relationship. The ritual slaughter of cattle was intimately tied up with bolstering the symbolic role and prestige of senior men as presiders over the economic and ritual destiny of the rural *umzi*. In the context of rituals, senior men served, on the one hand, as the key intermediaries of ritual power between the living and their ancestors and, on the other hand, as the guardians and providers of cattle for slaughter.

³¹ Moreover, rural people have different names for what are very similar rituals, or similar names for rituals that differ in substance or form. These may be rooted in 'ethnic' (Xhosa/Mfengu), clan and even religious affiliation differences.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusions

People farm for sentimental reasons. Widows keep cattle to remember their husbands. Men do so to be recognised as a man in the community, because it is part of being African people, part of living in a village in a rural setting... [T]hey persevere... because it is part of who they are, what they know, and what they think is expected of them to do – Mr. Siza Manjezi, Peddie farmer.

I began this dissertation by outlining the decades-old juxtaposition of the agriculture in the former reserve areas as traditional (i.e. non-market) versus the more efficient modern orientation of commercial farming enterprises. Mainstream agricultural economists and others argued (and continue to argue) that the woes of communal land tenure, epitomised by gross overstocking and overgrazing, have exacted a heavy, probably irreversible, toll on the natural environment. The wealth of rural people was said to be tied up irrationally and inefficiently in their vast numbers of cattle, which came to be viewed as ‘stranded assets’ that needed to be liberated through the penetration of the market, through better education and through the provision of information about alternative savings mechanisms.

The fundamental weakness of this argument, as Bundy (1988), Wolpe (1972), Molteno (1977) and others pointed out decades ago, was its failure to recognise that the former reserve areas were not separate from the ‘main’ economy, but integrally linked, even functional, to it. The absence of economic opportunities for upward mobility for the majority of rural black people, and the oppressive restrictions placed on their mobility and choices of residence, were what tied them to the reserves and to supposedly ‘traditional’ modes of livelihood, such as cattle-holding. These Marxist-inspired refutations of dualism were useful for the attention they drew to the fact that the reserve economy was unequivocally ‘articulated’ with the wider economy. However, because they eschewed a ‘cultural’ explanation of what was going on in the reserves, they proved insufficient on three counts.

Firstly, they did not address the question of why people in the reserves chose to invest in cattle (and other livestock) *per se*, rather than in other assets in the rural sphere. In this sense, they failed to adequately contextualise where cattle-holding had come

from and how cattle fitted into rural people's socio-political and cultural milieux (see Ainslie 2002c; Peires 1981).

Secondly, they failed to explain why, even when, from the early 1970s, the 'self-governing' and later 'independent' bantustans presented at least a minority of people with greater freedom of mobility and uneven yet undeniable opportunities for upward mobility and 'economic integration' into the cash economy, cattle have remained an attractive investment in the former reserve areas. In fact, cattle numbers in the Eastern Cape continued to rise through the 1990s and by 2004 they had reached their highest level since the late 1920s (Beinart 1992; Agri-News 2004).

Thirdly, the refutations of the 'two economies' position ignored the reality that the bantustans, however repugnant their very existence was to many people, were more than merely economically functional to capital. In fact, the reserves and (now former) bantustans were and have continued to be places where 'ordinary people' carried on with their social and cultural practices as best they could. Beinart (1994: 207) argues – and my analysis of the Ciskei leads me to concur with his view – that the homelands were 'not merely a social and environmental disaster zone. Things happened there and [some]¹ people bought into the system.' He goes on to argue that the bantustans 'need to be understood as phenomena in their own right and for the influence they had on South Africa as a whole.'

In his essay on the 'anthropology of economy', Gudeman (2001) argues that for the Kekchi Maya of southern Belize self-sufficiency in corn [maize] production provides an assurance against economic uncertainty, plays a role in ritual and identity and constitutes a 'badge of household position and village membership'. Maize production thereby connects the household and the community, outside the market. By contrast, the rice that is produced by the Kekchi as a cash crop fulfils few if any of these functions, yet allows for the accumulation of cash (Gudeman 2001: 44-45). The situation I encountered in rural Peddie District was analogous to this description of the Kekchi 'cultural economy' in southern Belize. Cattle-holding provided many rural people in Peddie District with a bulwark against economic hardship, in the sense

¹ This is my qualification. (See also Palmer 1997b: 319).

that not only did cattle provide utility goods for household consumption and for sharing, they also increased in number and value and were thus an effective and trusted means of saving 'slippery' cash. This was also why so many of my informants told me that 'cattle are the bank of the Xhosa'. Moreover, cattle played a significant role in ritual practice and thus people's social and cultural sense of who they were, where they had come from and where they stood in relation to other people and other homesteads, both in the village and in 'town'.

For people in rural Peddie District, holding cattle was a thoroughly modern practice by which they attempted to adapt and maximise their use of: (i) the available physical resources, i.e. the 'free' grazing and water resources on the commons; (ii) the economic resources, i.e. the state-subsidised dipping and inoculation programmes, and the household labour available to them; and (iii) the cultural resources, i.e. the patriarchal values, practices such as bridewealth, norms of accumulation and sharing, and ritual practices. This they did to advance their particular social projects, within the limited range of options open to them.² As many observers have noted, investments in cattle were unique in providing a food security safety net both through the consumption and sharing of *amasi* [sour milk] and meat and through their uses (draught, manuring) in arable production.

In Chapter Three, I examined the political-economic and social impacts of successive government programmes on rural people's cattle-holdings. Attempts by the state over several decades to intervene in the rural sector were driven by different, sometimes incompatible and even contradictory, political impulses. Official concerns about environmental degradation and the inability of the reserves to support the vast numbers of economically superfluous (black) residents and their livestock precipitated the implementation of Betterment Planning. Although a central element of Betterment Planning was the reduction of livestock numbers in the reserve areas, bitter opposition by rural people meant that this component had to be abandoned. The Nationalist government did not wish to destroy the semblance of a reserve economy as it moved towards the consolidation of 'grand apartheid'. The overcrowding, landlessness and pressure on grazing resources that characterised the reserve areas of

² For this dissertation, I reviewed some of the historical and cultural antecedents for the continued salience of cattle holding, but this chapter has been omitted in the interests of brevity.

Peddie District from the early 1960s typified the situation in most other Ciskeian reserves. This predicament was closely connected to, and indeed flowed from, the changes in white farming which led to the mass eviction of labour tenants in adjacent areas of the central Eastern Cape.

The creation of the Ciskei bantustan introduced new agrarian development programmes and modified several older ones in the reserve areas. The development of 'border industries' meant that rural people could retain more regular contact with their village homesteads. My analysis centred on agrarian changes in Peddie District, particularly the departure of white farmers and the equivocal impact of the Ciskei National Ranch on village cattle production practices. I reviewed agricultural developments in the post-1994 Eastern Cape Province and found many of these to be path-dependent in their dualist and technocratic approach to the 'development' of this sector.

My examination of 'rural' livelihoods in Chapter Four revealed the increasing level of dependence, in respect of the dominant source of livelihood in many households, on social welfare disbursements and on casual work, stylised as 'jobbing' by my informants. I questioned the validity of the emphasis in the livelihoods literature on the substantial 'diversification' that is said increasingly to characterise rural people's livelihoods as they become 'unplugged' from the wider economy. I showed how Hamburg and Loverstwit differed in this respect, with Hamburg's bigger pool of salaried people feeding into a more robust 'informal' economy than was the case in Loverstwit. I noted that, while diversification into 'informal' livelihoods – often centred on the extractive use of natural resources – was critical for some people and supplementary for many others in Peddie District, questions needed to be asked about the capacity of these forms of livelihood to support any but a fraction of the households in rural Peddie District for any length of time.

I found that two cultural idioms were particularly important in understanding rural people's accumulation strategies. These were *ukwakh'umzi* [building the homestead] and *masincedisane* [let us help each other]. Where, on the one hand, gender and generational contestation was heightened within the *umzi*, and on the other hand, very poor and comparatively far better-off households lived cheek-by-jowl in the village

context, the push and pull of these two cultural idioms intermittently revealed and covered up widening cracks in the social order. This situation presented comparatively wealthier households, vis-à-vis their impoverished neighbours who were eking out a precarious hand-to-mouth existence, with the dilemma of how best to protect their wealth and consolidate their economic position, without being regarded as indifferent to the desperate plight of their neighbours. To be seen as uncaring and aloof was to risk arousing jealousy in others that could invite anti-social acts (including witchcraft) against one's *umzi*. Strategies of sharing and of redistribution in rural Peddie District took explicit and constant cognisance of these threats.

I noted that in the light of changes in the wider economy and the employment opportunities on offer, the overall chances of upward mobility for the many comparatively poorly educated rural people seemed remote. Moreover, their options for investment and saving in what I call 'socially meaningful assets' in the villages of Peddie District remained rather limited. I suggest that in rural areas like Peddie District, notwithstanding periods of drought and some threat of stocktheft, cattle constituted one of a rather limited range of assets that offered people high 'convertibility' over time. This convertibility included the ready (if culturally and socially circumscribed) exchange of cattle for cash to sustain the household economically, but equally the conversion of cash into cattle and thence into social and prestige dividends in the moral economy of the village, to sustain the homestead socially and ritually.

In Chapter Five, I pointed to the important distinction between holding and owning cattle for understanding the nuances of this sector. In examining who exactly held cattle in the villages of Peddie District, I reviewed the available data and noted both its paucity and unreliability. I provided data from the three different synchronic surveys I conducted to show that cattle in rural Peddie District were concentrated in the hands of senior men. Where women held cattle, it was as widows. I estimated that 28% of the households in former reserve areas of Peddie District held cattle. As many as 53% of these households held six or fewer cattle. I showed that, on the whole, the heads of cattle-holding households were poorly educated, but that they were not very different from the overall educational profile for their age groups in rural Peddie

District. I found exchanges of cattle in *lobolo* transactions to be minimal, so that while *lobolo* was negotiated in cattle the actual exchange usually consisted of cash. I found that the availability of household labour seriously affected the cost of keeping cattle. I pointed out that cattle served both to lock scarce resources in the rural sphere and to build local social networks, but also to help ensure a flow of more resources to the rural homestead from town, through remitted contributions towards the purchases of acaricides, the occasional purchase of a heifer or ox, payment of the labour needed for herding and of the costs of hosting ritual slaughter events.

I argued that, to understand why some households held cattle while other, seemingly similar households did not, we must examine the structure of differently situated rural households and the biographies of individual members of these households. In Chapter Six, I thus explored the symbolic and discursive centrality of cattle in the essentially patriarchal *ukwakh'umzi* project for male-headed households. It emerged that the decision to invest in cattle per se was not an all-or-nothing cultural imperative (despite the sensibilities of my senior male informants), but was a choice that was made and then continually contested in mostly male-headed, but also widow-headed, rural households. I showed that cattle-holding continued to be significant for those categories of household and especially men who pursued localised versions of the *ubudoda* [manhood] norm. This norm positioned men as '*intsika yekhaya*' [the pillar of the home] as breadwinner and provider, and as having a high degree of control over the economic affairs of the *umzi*. It was by rhetorically linking cattle-holding to the key local projects of *ukwakh'umzi* [building the home] and *masincedisane* [let us help each other], especially by emphasising the 'homestead strengthening' consumption of cattle in rituals, that senior men and some senior women – as well as certain categories of younger men who held cattle – sought to exercise some control over the 'terms and tropes' of increasingly differentiated social and economic relationships at household and village levels. Cattle, far more than money in the bank or renting a satellite dish, allowed rural people to engage with each other socially and economically.

Thus much of the work of rural, especially senior, men was directed towards policing the special place (or in Appadurai's [1986] terminology, maintaining limits on the 'commodity candidacy') of cattle as goods that they argued were symbolically crucial

to the material and the ritual well-being of the homestead and the wider community. For their part, younger men were trading on this 'patriarchal dividend' in the ways in which they sought to perpetuate the social and cultural prerogatives of men, whether they held cattle or not.

In Chapter Seven, I explored the position of younger, especially unmarried, women vis-à-vis cattle holding and the *ubudoda* norm. In increasing numbers, women in rural Peddie District were prepared to 'go it alone' without men, either by shunning marriage altogether or through divorce or estrangement. They found the means to head their households, secure their livelihoods (however meagre) and tried to educate their children. Women socialised mainly with other women in church groups, transacted with each other in rotating credit associations or burial societies and generally 'built the homestead' in broad adherence with Xhosa cultural norms, but in the absence of a male household head.

Some of this was an outcome of their frustration with heightened levels of domestic violence to which they were subjected as the taken-for-granted patriarchal dominance in the household and village ebbed away from men. Another reason for their preference related to the improved independent access to personal income and state-provided pensions and grants on the part of senior women. Of course, there was also a category of households headed by often poorly educated women that eked out an economically miserable existence without any reliable source of income. It was very apparent that, overall, single women showed least interest in the cattle economy. I explored case-studies in which women were embroiled in struggles over 'the cattle of inheritance'. These struggles revolved around the contested rights of men to dispose of the cattle, especially those that had come into the *umzi* herd as *ikhazi* [the cattle transferred during bridewealth exchange], as they saw fit.

I showed how changes in the strategic negotiation of bridewealth and marriage were highly suggestive of the increasing social prominence of employed younger women. I also explored what the 'decompression' of larger homesteads into the tiny formal housing estates like *Phola Park* in Hamburg village and less formally in places like Loverstwiist entailed socially, economically and ritually.

In Chapter Eight, I explored how the senior male heads of cattle-holding households endorsed the use and exchange of cattle for consumption in ritual slaughter, as long as such consumption took place within patriarchally informed cultural norms. These norms differed somewhat between those who were Christians and those who openly venerated their ancestors, but overall it was clear that rituals, both those that involved slaughtering cattle and others which did not such as beer drinks or Christian funerals, were recognised by all rural people, men and women, as significant social events. I contended that conducting rituals was crucial both for building community in rural Peddie District and for ensuring the critical flow of resources between town and the countryside.

Because, as I mentioned above, cattle-holding featured in the ever-widening differentials in material wealth that were so conspicuous between households in rural villages, the use of cattle in ritual slaughter was especially pertinent. The (economically) levelling nature of Xhosa ritual, in the sense that social categories such as clanship, genealogical seniority, age, gender and commensality were emphasised over measures of social difference and economic class (although class differences were not entirely ignored nor transcended), provided spaces to temporarily underplay if not negate local wealth differentials. By slaughtering cattle in specific rituals, people provided an important means of sharing and redistributing wealth among households in the village and further afield. The *imizi* hosting slaughter rituals made a sizeable contribution to the caloric and specifically protein intake of poorer people in the village, through the distribution of meat, other food and drink, especially traditional beer and alcohol.

It is precisely at those times when the relationships that exist between people were threatened by, for instance, economic changes (for example, the contraction of the formal labour market) – which were linked to differentiation and divergence of social relationships (for example, in marriage) and cultural interests – that new cultural ambiguities were introduced and contestations of value between people living in close-knit communities might be anticipated. But as Ferguson (1985: 668) has noted, ‘such conflict is not a sign of disintegration or crisis [rather] it is part of the process of maintaining and re-creating “tradition”, and “tradition” is never simply a residue of

the past. If the cultural rules governing livestock keeping ...persist, it is because they are made to persist; continuity as much as change must be created and fought for.'

As the unemployment crisis in post-apartheid South Africa widens, rural poverty deepens and government support for, among other things, livestock production by way of the dipping and vaccination programmes in the African reserve areas wavers, wealth differentials take on increased moral significance in the rural countryside. This brings the cultural imperative of *masincedisane* into sharper focus.

My analysis shows that, in the absence of radically improved opportunities for educational advancement and skills acquisition, cattle-holding by rural Xhosa-speakers is unlikely to fade away. At the same time, however, I do not doubt that animal husbandry skills (and the tacit, practical familiarity that many rural people have with cattle) were being lost in the many families that did not hold cattle and that, for reasons relating to Bourdieu's (1990) notion of *practice*, these skills were unlikely to be relearned by the younger generation in future.

However, I argue that the cultural ideal of cattle-ownership continues to constitute an important element of rural Xhosa identity and sociality. Many rural men and women regard holding cattle, which they know have considerable value in cash terms in the context of rural poverty, as one of the signal achievements of a successful homestead. A byre filled with cattle (and manure) constitutes both the surest evidence of the orderly co-operation within the homestead that leads to good fortune and the means, through ritual slaughter, by which the vital blessings of the ancestors are sought and secured.

While many observers have been able to discern a long-term trend in declining agrarian production across the communal reserve areas of the Eastern Cape, I think that it may be more fruitful to view investments, particularly in cattle, at the village and household level, as being more cyclical in nature. Annual rainfall and the quality and quantity of grazing resources play an obvious role in these cycles, as do changes in the political economy. Economic upturn in the regional urban centres increases people's capacity to invest in their rural homes and in a range of agricultural practices, notably cattle-holding. Conversely, as unemployment rises and people's

levels of livelihood insecurity increases, they may be expected to liquidate or even abandon agrarian projects of accumulation, for example investments in cattle or field/garden production. In fact, I found that the current conjuncture, in which the social welfare disbursements and 'jobbing' led to greater livelihood contestation and insecurity over the longer term, converting the irregular income streams into cattle was an attractive option for various rural *imizi* in their efforts to buffer future livelihood uncertainty.

What I have argued for (amongst other things) in this dissertation is renewed recognition of the connectedness of the 'rural' and 'urban' economies. Initiatives that seek to bring about improvements in 'rural' livelihoods must take seriously the full house of cultural practices *and* spatial connections that shape people's social and economic interactions. Furthermore, the agency of rural people and the various values they attribute to what they are doing should become our analytical starting point.

It would seem that more and more of the population of the Eastern Cape, both rural and urban, are likely to find themselves in the interstices of the market economy in the years ahead. This is especially so as changes in the macro-economy and labour market put a premium on the very formal education and skills that many rural people lack. It is thus to alternative more local forms of saving and accumulation, and particularly to those that provide people and households with opportunities to secure their livelihoods while still engaging with each other in socially and culturally meaningful ways, that many rural people are likely to turn in future. Where these promise a measure of economic and social autonomy at the household level in the face of the inexorable penetration of the market, they might well be worthy of external support rather than censure.

I conclude by restating the question with which I commenced this dissertation. What, in the year 2001, accounts for the continued interest in cattle on the part of many of the rural people living in the former bantustan reserve areas of the Eastern Cape? I hope that by bringing together in my analysis aspects of political economy, of household-level livelihoods, of the social (gender, generational, class) and the cultural (especially ritual) components of what cattle-holding in Peddie District entails, I have gone some way towards answering this question.

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LIFE HISTORIES AND OTHER INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED DURING FIELDWORK¹

Hamburg Village

1. Dyido, Funeka, 2 May 2001
2. Gqwaka, Aron, 18 February 2001
3. Gqwaka, Nonyameko, 25 February 2001
4. Gussha, Nontembeko, 17 June 2001
5. Gussha, Patrick, 9 May 2001
6. Gussha, Zilindile, 4 July 2001
7. Hobana, Thembisile, 14 June 2001
8. Hobana, Vukile, 8 May 2001
9. Jakavula, Laduma, 10 June 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
10. Lugalo, Nozibele, 3 May 2001
11. Lugalo, Thembaletu, 22 August 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
12. Mahonono, Ngqani, 30 March 2001
13. Makhubalo, Busani, 15 June 2001
14. Mangwane, Lusiba, 16 April 2001
15. Mangwane, Zamuxolo, 30 August 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
16. Manjezi, Siphiso, 31 August 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
17. Mapikela, Khunjulwa, 26 February 2001
18. Mapuma, Mathemba, 31 August 2000, 17 February 2001, 24 March 2001,
19. Mapuma, Phumla, 4 May 2001
20. Matshotyana, Monica, 3 June 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
21. Mdunyelwa, Fezeka, 30 April 2001, 1 May 2001
22. Mei, Mrs., 10 August 2001
23. Mtshonisi, Zimasile, 24 May 2001
24. Mva, Norah, 18 June 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
25. Mziwakhe Mangcangaza, 6 June 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
26. Ndindwa, Bulelwa, 17 January 2001
27. Ndongeni, Mvuyiseko, 17 August 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
28. Ndongeni, Wandisile, 23 August 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
29. Ngcwembe, Stanford, 15 February 2001
30. Nkosinathi Ndondlo, 2 May 2001
31. Noludumo Beja, 30 April 2001
32. Nomathemba Myataza, 17 May 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
33. Nothemba Myataza, 25 May 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
34. Noweyitile Ngoxo, 1 May 2001
35. Noyise Mtshonisi, 2 May 2001
36. Nxadi, Noma, 30 March 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha), 1 May 2001
37. Nxadi, Lindikhaya, 28 May 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
38. Nxadi, Fakati, 12 March 2001
39. Paliso, Ndyabo, 27 February 2001, 28 May 2001, 30 June 2001
40. Paliso, Susan, 1 April 2001
41. Peyi, Mzwabantu, 8 June 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)

¹ The interviews conducted by Patrick Gussha in Hamburg and Sonwabo Mase in Loverstwit were done with the aid of a semi-structured interview schedule, and were aimed at eliciting basic biographical and household demographic data.

42. Peyi, Thumani, 9 June 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
43. Potwana, Noncedo, 12 June 2001
44. Rasi, Dickson, 21 June 2001
45. Rasi, Henderson Galelekile, 2 May 2001
46. Ratya, Zithulile 31 March 2001, 13 June 2001
47. Roro Ndondlo, 4 June 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
48. Schutz Kolisi, 24 May 2001
49. Siziwe Mavis Makhubalo, 4 May 2001
50. Solwandle, Thulile, 23 August 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
51. Soyana, Armstrong, 19 June 2001 (interviewed by Patrick Gussha)
52. Steeman, Gloria and Bert, 8 February 2001
53. Tshobingane, John, 9 May 2001
54. Yona, Zukiswa, 8 May 2001
55. Zibi, Nowanele, 25 January 2001, 27 January 2001

Loverstwiw village

56. Bhadu, Phindile, 30 October 2001
57. Bhadu, Phike, 13 September 2001
58. Bhani, MamVundla, 14 September 2001
59. Booi, MamNkabane, 12 September 2001
60. Cekiso, MamTshoyane, 14 September 2001
61. Dingela, Helele Kelly, 3 September 2001
62. Dingela, Sakhiwo, 6 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
63. Dyeshana, Mr. 11 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
64. Gedze, Qeke, 12 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
65. Goniwe, Lungile, September 2001
66. Goniwe, Vukile, 12 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
67. Halana, Mr. 12 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
68. Hlekani, Jacob, 8 October 2001, (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
69. Mabuyane, Mrs., 9 November 2001, (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
70. Malmani, Mr. 30 October 2001
71. Mbondi, Vikiwe, 8 October 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
72. Mdunyelwa, Tsibisile, 14 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
73. Mgaba, Kholisile, 20 October 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
74. Nontsele, Kutu, 12 September 2001
75. Nqamrha, Fanayi, 8 October 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
76. Nyathi, Mbhele, 12 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
77. Nxadi, Mzoli, 26 October 2001
78. Nxomani, Thamsanqa, 12 September 2001
79. Nxomani, Noncedile, 12 September 2001
80. Peyi, *MamZangwa*, 11 October 2001
81. Potwana, *MamTshoyane*, 11 October 2001
82. Seti, Mr., 11 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
83. Sikani, Thembisile, 20 November 2001
84. Sikani, Noamen, 10 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
85. Spaji, Mrs. 10 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
86. Tom, Nomteki, 12 September 2001
87. Welem, *MaDzana*, 9 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)
88. Yali, Josephine, September 2001
89. Yali, Xolile, 6 November 2001 (interviewed by Sonwabo Mase)

Miscellaneous Interviews In Peddie District

90. Bomela, Mr. Peddie South commercial farmer, 19 November 2001
91. Cockcroft, Dave & Liesenberg, Johan. Cattle speculators, Grahamstown, 2 November 2001
92. Hundleby, Jim. Former Regional Manager, Ciskei Nat. Ranch, retired in Stutterheim, 19 July 2001
93. Manjezi, Siza. Peddie South commercial farmer, 15 September 1999, 16 May 2001
94. Manjezi, Zukile. Agric. Extension officer, Peddie, 14 November 2001
95. Mapuma, Shepherd. Peddie South commercial farmer, 7 November 2001
96. Moodie, Derick. Shop-keeper, Wesley, 31 October 2001
97. Rogers, Elaine. Former trading store owners, Wesley, 31 October 2001
98. Snyman, Christo. Former manager, Ciskei Nat. Ranch., Wesley Village, 15 April 2001
99. Webber, Russell. Farmer and speculator, Bira, 28 November 2000, 9 March 2001

APPENDIX ONE:

Studying 'rural' livelihoods

Defining the sociological unit of analysis

The challenges of studying what is in reality a range of different, highly fluid social structures grouped under the concept of 'household' are now well rehearsed (see Ardington & Lund 1996; Moore 1994; Guyer & Peters 1987; Netting *et al.* 1984; Berry 1986). For the former bantustan areas of South Africa, Spiegel (1990) and others (Niehaus 1994; Sharp 1994; De Wet & Holbrook 1997) have emphasised the significant fluidity or 'permeability' which characterises rural and urban households with regard to their structure and composition, patterns of residence, consumption, reproduction, the contribution of individual members to the sustenance of the household and the distribution of earnings.

This wide range of variation in the nature of the household, which is itself a significant topic of enquiry, seriously undermines its value as a unit of analysis (Spiegel 1990: 261). Moreover, the assumption that the household is a basic unit of social relations tends to mask socio-economic and power differences and contestation within the domestic unit that are rooted in gender, age and generational differences, as well as in differences in educational status and earning power (May 1996). Moore (1994: 87) has drawn our attention to the 'emergence of a view of the household '...[as] a locus of competing interests, rights, obligations and resources, where household members are often involved in bargaining, negotiation and possibly even conflict [with each other].' Similarly, Ngwane (2003: 688) argues that 'in places such as Cancele [in the former Transkei], the household merely existed as a site of struggle over an imagined form' and should be 'recast as a field of discourse rather than a natural category'. I found much in rural Peddie District to support this view of the household. There is, in fact, no *isiXhosa* term that equates with 'household'. *Indlu* refers literally to a house, while *ikhaya* [home] is similar to *umzi* [homestead] and has connotations that relate to a person's birthplace or adopted home, and his/her sense of belonging to that place and that particular community of people (Mayer & Mayer 1971[1961]).

What exactly is an *umzi*? An *umzi*, at least as the term was used in Peddie District, comprised an often fluid set of co-operating individuals, who were not all resident in the same place for most of the year. These individuals shared, or were at least morally bound by, certain short and longer-term goals with respect to the social reproduction and material well-being of their particular homestead. Membership of a rural *umzi* conferred certain rights and obligations on individuals, depending on their age, gender, place of residence and employment status. For women, an important consideration was their marital status. Crucially, an *umzi* always had an internally recognised head (called *umninimzi*), who could be either a man or a woman (if a woman, then usually a widow). The exact authority attached to such 'headship', in the sense of both the arena and the modes through which this authority was exercised, could well be contested. One example was in situations where a man had been unemployed for a long time and the *umzi* was supported by his wife, son or daughter.

An *umzi* was rooted (sometimes serially) in a definite physical place, not least because the patrilineal ancestors, who were expected to preside over the fortunes of the *umzi* and its members, must be kept informed, mainly by means of ritual practices, about the exact location of the *umzi*. Rituals to this end, notably the *ukuvula'mzi* [to open the home] ritual, were conducted in the cattle *kraal* [byre] of the *umzi*, presided over by the most senior man of that particular agnatic cluster.¹

Although some people moved their *imizi* from place to place over time (see Ainslie 1998), this ritual dimension of what constituted an *umzi* was probably its defining feature in that, by imbuing a residential space with multi-layered meanings of belonging and social identity, it provided a potent sense of permanence and continuity (Ainslie 1998: 14). It was for this reason that McAllister (2001: 116-122, 190) argues that the *umzi* can best be conceptualised as a 'composite entity' in which the 'homestead as productive unit is inseparable from the social [and moral] relationships that constitute it'.

In the context of high population mobility, this powerful sense of belonging was especially important for the town-based dispersed members of the *umzi* (Ainslie 1998: 14; cf. Baber 1996: 282). However, it is another implication of this moral/ritual

¹ Raum and De Jager (1972: 185) refer to this ritual as '*ukwazisa*, [lit. to inform or make known, i.e. the dedication of the homestead to the ancestors]'.

dimension of an *umzi* that is important in the context of 'rural' livelihoods and the substitution of assets. The sense of belonging that an *umzi* afforded to members of the agnatic cluster acted as a constraint on the sale of dwellings and residential sites in rural Peddie District.² The examples of creeping commoditisation in land that I came across in Loverstwit and Hamburg consisted of some people selling their houses and residential lands because they planned to move permanently away from the area. Such sales were rationalised, in the few instances where I was able to discuss the matter with the departing owners, as 'this place is not our *umzi* because we never opened it [ritually] and so selling it is not an issue in the family' or 'we will open our new *umzi* in Village X to inform our ancestors that we have moved there'.

In physical terms, an *umzi* usually comprised a yard, which was often fenced, incorporating one or more buildings, often including a *rontawu* [a round 'hut', which was usually constructed with building blocks and mortar] that was required for conducting rituals. An *umzi* also comprised a cattle *kraal* [byre], irrespective of whether the *umzi* owned cattle or other livestock, although ideally the byre should contain fresh manure. Each *umzi* ideally had a garden and possibly an adjacent or nearby arable field, although, given high indices of landlessness, many *imizi* no longer had access to arable land.

Thus a key difference between a household as generally conceptualised and this definition of a homestead or *umzi* was that an *umzi* implied a defined 'home' space and both a moral and an economic project, which all played a role in delineating membership of the *umzi* (Fay 2003; De Wet & Holbrook 1997: 255). The moral injunctions of such membership were generally clear. Those who had a conjugal or genealogical relation (such as son or daughter) to the head of the *umzi*, but failed to make, within their means, a real contribution to 'building the *umzi*', were seen as undermining the *umzi* in a moral sense and may over time have placed their *umzi* membership, and the rights that this entailed, in jeopardy (McAllister 1985: 123).

² Of course, another, arguably more serious constraint was that the majority of rural people did not have legal title to their residential sites. In consequence, there was no legal market in land, residential or arable, in the former bantustan reserves. In fact, some people in Hamburg had title to their four hectare plots of land, but even here sales of land were not common, since the homestead was not a mere commodity to be sold at the whim of any of the living members of the *umzi*.

Conversely, fictive kin who were materially and morally committed to building the *umzi* were generally considered to be full members of that *umzi*.

It is important, however, not to lose sight of the fact that the *umzi* as described was an historical construct within the predominantly patriarchal structure of rural Eastern Cape Xhosa society. As such, it continued to adapt in response to changes in the wider political economy, including the decline of migrant labour and changing gender relations, amongst other things (Beinart 1992; McAllister 1992; Bank 2002b).

Identifying and measuring livelihoods

There are certain areas, such as Keiskammahoek and *Qwaqwa*, where a great deal of anthropological and other social research has been conducted in specific localities. However, one legacy of South Africa's policies of segregation and apartheid is that many of the effects of economic changes experienced since the late 1970s in the rural, especially bantustan, hinterland remain under-researched and weakly conceptualised in theoretical terms (Baber 1996: 269; Weiner *et al.* 1997: 45-46; May *et al.* 2000: 20). Despite increased research interest in land reform and rural poverty during the initial post-1994 period, and the 'snapshot' insights into the workings of the rural economy that have been provided by various large quantitative surveys, such as Statistics South Africa's October Household Surveys and the two post-apartheid national censuses (conducted in 1996 and 2001), large gaps remain in our understanding specifically of the diverse ways in which people construct their livelihoods in the rural reserves (Murray 2000, 2002; Scoones & Wolmer 2003).

Apart from the practical issues of access and trust that inevitably affect all detailed enquiries into rural people's livelihoods, research into rural livelihoods has encountered a range of methodological problems relating to measurement (Ardington & Lund 1996; Murray 2002). The first of these problems is the difficulty of adequately quantifying total household income (Ferguson 1992: 56).³ This follows, in part, from the dispersed nature of the household where variable remittances in cash

³ See Ellis (2000: 15) who argues that 'a particular composition of activities and associated income flows represent [sic] the main, visible, outcome of the process by which a livelihood is constructed. Summarising this in income terms merely brings livelihood diversity into sharper focus; it is not meant to suggest that the underlying social processes are made to disappear or are regarded as unimportant for policy purposes.'

and in kind are often important sources of livelihood, but are frequently difficult to quantify accurately, even with longer-term fieldwork among a small sample of households (see Campbell *et al.* 2002: 14-15). Secondly, the diversification of livelihoods, some of which are opportunistic, seasonal and/or temporary, makes accounting difficult and contributes to problems of measurement. Thirdly, the undervaluation of self-provisioning through agriculture and natural resource harvesting, often as a result of a focus on 'dominant' cash-based income sources, may seriously affect the characterisation of livelihoods (see May 1996: 19, footnote 29; Shackleton *et al.* 2000). Fourthly, the constant dynamic interplay between changing household structure and labour availability and the piecing together of livelihoods tends to render any aggregation of synchronic findings (such as through developing a typology of livelihoods) arbitrary and increasingly inaccurate over the medium to long term.

One strategy has been to concentrate on quantifying expenditure rather than income, on the premise that, on the whole, expenditure tends to be more visible. However, this is not always the case and, given the dispersed nature of the *umzi*, this is likely to suffer from many of the same difficulties of measurement. A further problem encountered in measuring livelihoods is that comparison and generalisation based on findings from specific study sites continue to be hampered by non-standardised definitions and the different array and grouping of livelihoods generated by researchers working in different areas (Bryceson 2002: 730).

A fairly common strategy adopted by researchers in livelihoods and poverty studies is to inductively develop a descriptive typology of households, in which households that share certain demographic or 'dominant income' characteristics (or both) are grouped together until all the households in the sample or given population have been accounted for (Aliber 2003: 477; Kepe 2002a: 88ff). This approach may, however, suffer from the same shortcomings as one-off surveys when users implicitly extrapolate from a synchronic view of the households in question, without dealing adequately with how and why the various household types change over time. The typical household typology approach almost inevitably runs the risk of portraying a static picture of what is, in fact, a rather dynamic reality (see May *et al.* 2000). At first glance, the characterisation of household-level poverty that has been popularised

in the ‘food security’ literature seems somewhat more sophisticated (see Maxwell 2001: 18).⁴ The three categories identified in this literature are: (i) *enduring* households, that are able to maintain food security on a continuous basis; (ii) *resilient* households, that suffer stresses and shocks but recover quickly; (iii) and fragile (or *vulnerable*) households, that become increasingly insecure in response to shocks.

However, I found myself spending an inordinate amount of time trying to decide which categories the households in my livelihood sample fell into and then feeling uneasy about some of these decisions. Although this categorisation attempts to introduce a processual dimension into understanding poverty (using ‘food-security’ as the index in this case), it is firstly its non-disaggregated use of ‘the household’ as unit of analysis which limits its usefulness. This is because it is unclear how the approach deals with changes in household form that are induced by changes in livelihood. Secondly, this categorisation of households (enduring, resilient and vulnerable) assumes that longitudinal data on particular households are available, when most often such data are not. This throws the analyst back on (what should be tentative) generalisation and extrapolation over time and across different households. Thirdly, the connection between the three categories, specifically in terms of explaining how and why particular households either move ‘up’ (i.e. become ‘enduring’) or slip ‘down’ (into a state of greater vulnerability), remains poorly developed.

The limited basket of rural livelihoods

My survey of recent livelihood studies indicated the recurrence of a particular range of livelihoods throughout (former) bantustan areas of rural South Africa. Baber (1996: 297), for example, listed ten sources of income in his detailed study of rural livelihoods in two former bantustan villages in the (then) Northern Province.⁵ Yet in both villages, a small number of livelihoods constituted the basket of key livelihoods in particular households. In his first site, Mamone village, 75% of livelihoods were comprised of remittances, ‘pensions and transfers’, as well as ‘informal wages and

⁴ What attracted me to this conceptualisation is that it forces the analyst to take a longer perspective of both the viability of the household as a ‘productive and reproductive unit’ and of poverty, deprivation and indeed wealth as experienced by individual households over time (see Maxwell 2001: 20). As Broch-Due and Anderson (1999: 9) note, ‘[v]iews of poverty and wealth very much depend upon where you stand’ (see Murray [2002] for more on understanding poverty in relational terms).

⁵ What Baber appears to omit (which may be negligible in his study, but this seems unlikely), is the contribution of natural resource harvesting to household incomes.

activities'. In his other research site, the village of Rantlekane, 93% of household income was made up of these categories of livelihoods (Baber 1996: 297).

For rural households in the higher-rainfall province of KwaZulu-Natal, May (1996: 19ff) identified nine 'livelihood packages'. To constitute these 'packages' households variously combine: (a) wage labour (in either the formal or informal market), (b) agricultural and non-farm petty commodity production, (c) pensions and other state transfers and (d) remittances from elsewhere. Livelihood diversification appeared to be greater here, because, of the nine 'livelihood packages' that May identifies, all but the 'marginalised' category of households combined more than two sources of income. In fact, five of the nine categories combine four or five sources of income, suggesting considerable livelihood diversification. However, it was only one of May's categories (comprising close to 25% of the rural households in KwaZulu-Natal), which exhibited what I term *significant* diversification. I define as *significant* a situation where the single biggest household income source contributes no more than one-third of overall household income, in cash terms, rather than any other measure, such as labour expended (May 1996: 21-23).

Refining the key concepts used in the livelihoods literature

The above discussion indicates how murky the debate on livelihood diversification can become. Unfortunately, some of the terms that are central to the analysis of rural livelihoods are employed somewhat loosely in the literature. I have already alluded to my definition of *significant* livelihood diversification. 'Livelihood adaptation' is arguably the central concept which needs to be unpacked more carefully if the livelihood debate is to progress to issues that are more substantive than definitional. *Adaptation* has been defined as 'the continuous process of changes in livelihoods which either enhance existing security or wealth or try to reduce vulnerability and poverty' (Ellis 2000: 63).

By this definition, livelihood adaptation may include the *diversification* of livelihoods, but the process may also involve other strategies, such as seeking new ways to sustain the existing livelihood portfolio, which may include no diversification of livelihoods per se. The well-documented process of intensification in arable

production in coastal areas of the former Transkei and Ciskei bantustans, through the steady abandonment of cultivation in distant arable lands in favour of enlarged and more intensively cultivated home gardens, is an example of a livelihood *adaptation* to changes in the availability of labour and other inputs, but it does not involve livelihood diversification (Andrew 1992; Beinart 1998; cf. Tiffen *et al.* 1994).

Specialisation is another form of adaptation, which may involve shedding less productive livelihoods in order to concentrate solely on more promising ones (Byrceson 2002: 737). At times, *specialisation* occurs between members of the same household, with one member perhaps opting to become a migrant worker and another member choosing to remain in the village and to specialise in natural resource harvesting for sale. Insofar as the dispersed livelihood specialists remain members of the same household, livelihood *diversification* can be said to have taken place.

Ellis suggests, erroneously I think, that deliberately changing the size of the resident household group to reduce the dependency ratio in response to income deficits is an example of livelihood diversification (cf. Ellis 2000: 59). Unless the people released in this manner go on to generate a new livelihood for the household, this strategy is actually another form of adaptation – for which I suggest the term *dependency contraction* – one which was particularly common in the Eastern Cape, where especially children were regularly dispersed to other villages and towns.

Livelihood *substitution* involves, to my understanding, another form of adaptation in respect of strategies that can be adopted to reshape a household's repertoire of livelihoods. This process entails the substitution of one type of livelihood for another, either temporarily (for instance, seasonally) or more permanently. The man retrenched from an urban job who buys a tractor and starts to plough for people in the village for a fee has merely substituted one livelihood strategy for another. His sources of livelihood (and, by extension, of the household to which he belongs) have not increased, nor have they become more diverse. The net effect *at the household level* is not a more diverse range of livelihoods, but an outcome in which the household livelihood diversity index remains constant (Ellis 2000: 15, 238). These may seem to be simple points to make, but the discussion points to the necessity of investigating the existence of 'livelihood

diversification' rather more thoroughly than appears to be the case in much of the literature.

Lastly, *diversification* in rural livelihoods has been defined as 'the process by which [the members of particular] households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living' (Ellis 2000: 15) [my parenthesis]. Note that this definition includes an appraisal based on the phrase 'increasingly diverse portfolio', which is not relationally nor temporally defined. The key issue here, I suggest, is that agreement should be reached that the notion of livelihood diversification relates to, and should be measured at, the household level, not in aggregate, i.e. across households, villages or rural areas in general. Practitioners and writers should agree that an assessment of whether the livelihoods of people in a particular village or area constitute an example of 'multiple livelihoods' must rest on the extent of *significant* diversity in the livelihoods in evidence at the household level, not at the more nebulous 'community' or village level. By this measure, many rural villages in the Eastern Cape evinced livelihood strategies that were not diversified to any marked extent (see discussion below). With my use of these concepts clarified, I turn now to what the new orthodoxy on 'rural livelihoods' in the Eastern Cape encompasses.

Debating the nature of 'rural' livelihoods in the Eastern Cape

Cousins (1996,1999) and others (Shackleton *et al.* 2001; Lahiff 2003; Scoones & Wolmer 2003) have argued that livelihoods in rural South Africa are characterised by the considerable diversity of strategies that people follow and may best be characterised as 'multiple livelihoods'. With their interest in pressing for a particular kind of (broadly 'pro-poor', see James [2000: 144]) agrarian reform, these analysts are at pains to stress the critical importance of a land-based safety net to the livelihoods of rural people, notwithstanding the low returns to agriculture that have historically been recorded for households in many rural areas of South Africa.

There is no gainsaying the important contribution of natural (including agrarian) resources to the majority of households, even in densely populated rural areas like Peddie District. The contribution of natural resources for the purposes of self-provisioning was, of course, part of the 'rural dividend', through the savings in cash

that this provisioning entailed. This is the ‘hidden harvest’ that recent observers have been keen to have policy-makers sit up and take cognisance of (see Scoones 1990; Cousins 1999; Campbell *et al.* 2002). Indeed, natural resource use contributes both to people’s overall repertoire of livelihood strategies as well as to their local sense of identity and well-being as rural people. Commonly used natural resources in rural Peddie included firewood, water, grazing resources, edible fruits and vegetables, wood which is variously used as building materials and for fencing, medicinal plants, wild game (bushmeat) and so on (Ainslie *et al.* 1997; see also Cocks & Wiersum [2003: 45-46] for a comprehensive list of resources used in rural Peddie District).

It was not my intention to attempt in my data-collection or analysis of livelihoods in rural Peddie District to duplicate or refine these approaches of ‘counting cow-pats’ i.e. painstakingly trying to place a value on natural resource use. I acknowledge that virtually every household in both the villages I worked in used at least one, but often several, of the natural resources listed above for the purposes of self-provisioning and thus benefited by foregoing the need to purchase these resources or their substitutes for cash. But it seems to me that Cousins goes too far when he argues that the benefits derived from communal rangelands, including such services as ‘food security, nutrition, income, medicine, fertiliser, fuel, building material, spiritual health and aesthetic satisfaction, ...may help to explain why more people do not leave the apparently ‘impoverished’ rural areas to seek their fortunes in the towns and cities’ (Cousins 1999: 300).⁶ To suggest that it is their access to natural resources that keeps people economically buoyant and keen to remain in rural areas is either to misread the substantial evidence to the contrary (Maree & De Vos 1975: 21-22; Manona 1999; Wilson & Mamphole [eds.] 1989; Breslin *et al.* 1997) or to conflate *choice* and *necessity* in people’s decisions about their place(s) of residence and their livelihood strategies. Indeed, this conflation is something that appears to confound analyses of

⁶ This may be a throwaway remark, as anyone who has conducted research in the former bantustans knows that the poverty experienced by the rural majority is both chronic and pervasive. In Shackleton, Shackleton and Cousins (2000: 3), there is greater acknowledgement of the pervasiveness and depth of poverty in rural South Africa. Clearly, the contribution of natural resources to rural people’s survival (‘as a safety net of final resort’) is important, but it is necessary to delineate the specific areas where this applies strongly, as Shackleton *et al.* (2001: 583) do with, ‘...the degree of [natural resource] use may vary considerably from region to region based on a number of factors including resource availability, accessibility, institutional controls, population densities, employment levels, income levels, availability of alternatives, and personal and cultural preferences’.

rural livelihoods, particularly those that are aimed at poverty reduction and I thus deal with it briefly below.

Although Ellis (2000: 56) points out the practical difficulties of making a clear distinction between choice and necessity in respect of livelihoods (elsewhere he refers to this distinction as the difference between ‘risk management’ and ‘coping strategies’ respectively [Ellis 1998]), I think there is some validity in insisting on the distinction, as it helps to highlight both the particular historical legacy and the contemporary structural constraints that rural people were (and are) confronted with in constructing their livelihoods.

Moreover, distinguishing between short-term, opportunistic and supplementary livelihood strategies and longer-term significant livelihoods is critical when trying to make broader statements about trends and longer-term changes in rural livelihoods (see Bryceson 2002: 731). Indeed, we should not lose sight of what Englund (2002: 149) argues for Malawi in a different context, namely that ‘... for the poor, [apparently creative, voluntarist livelihood diversification] strategies may rather imply a desperate experimentation with different possibilities under ‘abject’ economic conditions’ (cf. Campbell *et al.* 2002: 131). The point is that we need to recognise both the potential for and the extent of longer-term capital investment (i.e. in terms of cash and human labour) in a particular livelihood strategy, in order to differentiate adequately between significant and opportunistic livelihoods. In other words, high-capital/long-horizon (what I call ‘high commitment’) savings and investment livelihoods (such as in cattle or extensive arable production, or in secondary and post-secondary education for that matter), can and should usefully be differentiated from low-capital/short-horizon (or ‘low commitment’) natural resource harvesting livelihoods. If the goal of livelihoods analyses is poverty reduction, then this distinction is especially important for uncovering viable modes of longer-term accumulation through the adoption of particular livelihood strategies.

In relation to the relative significance of various livelihood strategies, there was variation from area to area, within areas and especially between households (see

Leibbrandt & Sperber 1997: 111ff).⁷ Critically, though, this variation in livelihood options hinged on any one of a number of potential local contingencies, for example, the presence of an irrigation scheme or timber-processing factory in the area (as in Manona [1999]), or a particular history of ‘involuntary’ resettlement (as in De Wet [1995a]) and not as a result of the apparently generic range of natural resource-based livelihoods from which different households constructed their own combination of livelihoods. De Wet (1995b: 57) provides a list of some of the factors that may contribute to differentiation at the level of village or household livelihoods. These historically contingent and locally specific factors include:

- the local economic significance of migrant remittances
- differential access to pensions
- differential access to [*and use of*] arable land and livestock
- the role of the domestic cycle in household survival and accumulation strategies
- the length of residence in an area
- the extent of access to political and bureaucratic power and patronage
- differential investments (past and current) in education

Over and above these factors, periods of domestic hardship, that generally track overall economic downturn and industrial lay-offs, follow upon the death of a key breadwinner or come about as the result of prolonged drought, are examples of change that obviously have considerable, often long-term, impacts on rural people’s livelihood strategies (see Campbell *et al.* 2002: 115).

Further complexity is introduced at the household level, as a result of high population mobility and social dislocation, including marital breakdown and through *dependency contraction* strategies, by the changing availability of labour needed for the execution of livelihood-related tasks. This is especially the case since these tasks remained largely gender-specific in nature (see McAllister 2001: 127; Hajdu 2003: 19; cf. Potts 2000: 817). Because of the widespread persistence of a gender division of labour, the relationship between the changing size and composition of a household and its

⁷ Nevertheless, it is my experience that there are significant and telling commonalities in the social, economic and of course, cultural particularities of people’s lived experiences in adjacent districts of the former Ciskei, such as Alice (formerly Victoria East), Keiskammahoek and Peddie, that make comparison and informed extrapolation valid and valuable.

livelihood portfolio *over time* remains a crucial element of this analysis. This is not something that survey-type data collection is well-suited to assess in particular situations (Ardington & Lund 1996: 52; Manona 1999; Murray 2002).

Any attempt to analyse 'rural' livelihoods must thus remain sensitive to the dynamic interplay between household forms (i.e. household size and composition, see Preston-Whyte [1974: 182ff]) and livelihoods (cf. Scoones 1990; Scoones *et al.* 1996). By delineating the various structural and other differences between households, a typology of households can be suggestive about the options available to different types of households in terms of constructing their livelihoods.

Another factor which should be taken into account in a characterisation of households is the earning power (and associated domestic authority) of the household head.⁸ Where the household head, whether male or female, had a secure income over time, he or she was often in a far stronger position to direct the accumulation strategies of the homestead. Over the longer term, these decisions would inevitably have an impact on the education and formal skills levels attained by household members and thus on their chances of finding employment, which would in turn influence the consequent form of the household. Poorly educated children were more likely to remain residentially attached to and economically dependent on their natal homesteads well into their adulthood than were better educated children, especially given the fall-back position provided by social welfare 'safety net' disbursements to the older generation.

To reiterate, I argue that a typical household typology approach, based on survey-derived data, inevitably has limited explanatory power regarding the longer-term social and economic processes of accumulation and exclusion. It cannot tell us much about how these processes are mediated and contested, both within and between households. Rather, in order to learn something about why particular types of household opt for particular livelihood options and not others, we need constantly to be mindful of the whole context of social factors and cultural constructs, including

⁸ Møller and Ferreira randomly selected households that had at least one member aged 55 years and over in their sample of 374 'rural black households' in the Eastern Cape (Møller & Ferreira 2003: 52). They point out that nearly 87% of these 'older' rural households in their Eastern Cape sample indicated that all the household income was pooled and that the 'person in the household with most say on how money was spent' was the head (75% of the responses) and the spouse of the household head (19% of the responses).

moral sanctions against certain types of behaviours, specific activities that may have had their provenance as acts of political and economic resistance to apartheid hegemony, practices that have a religious and ritual bent, norms of accumulation, sharing and exchange and different lifestyle orientations. We also need to be mindful that all of these are underlain by contingent and structural factors, such as differential access to land and other assets, and the fact that many households straddle the rural-urban divide in terms of the residential location and livelihoods of their members.

Take, for example, the significant shift that is said to have taken place from cattle to pigs as the main type of livestock held since the 1980s in Ngxingxolo village in peri-urban Mooiplaas (outside East London), to which Bank and Qambata (1999: 94) draw our attention (quoted in Bryceson 2002: 728). This shift was related, they argue, to the increased commoditisation of livestock production, especially of the livestock that was regarded as 'women's animals', such as pigs and chickens, which were frequently and easily sold, both locally and in the city. The shift to women's animals, Bank and Qambata suggest, was connected to changes in gender relations, and specifically to the increase in female-headed households. Female-headed households, often with their livelihood status enhanced by recently increased access to social welfare grants, were asserting their preference for types of livestock that were relatively unfettered by cultural restrictions, so that the care, slaughter and sale of pigs and chickens were least likely to attract any interference from men on these grounds. These were also animals that were easily kept adjacent to the homestead and, given the sometimes limited command that these women had over the labour of other members in their households, were thus better suited to the daily routines and labour constraints of these households.

But this situation, however persuasively argued and pervasive it appeared to be in the context of peri-urban Mooiplaas, might not play out in other rural areas. In deeper rural areas situated further from urban markets, where the potential for women to market their produce was curtailed by limited knowledge of the market, high transport and other input costs and the difficulties that many rural women experienced in enforcing payment for produce sold on credit, the situation may be different. Here, a shift to the more intensive production and commoditisation of

‘women’s animals’, especially where it is driven by ill-fated government-sponsored ‘piggery and poultry’ projects, may not be as financially rewarding nor as obvious.

To summarise, I argue that most of the evidence backs the contention that, while at the aggregate level the potential range of rural livelihood strategies in rural villages was wide, the actual extent of livelihood diversification within households was often not remarkable (see Kepe 2002a; Fraser *et al.* 2003; McAllister 2001: 32-36; Manona 1999). The households that were most diversified in terms of their livelihoods were those that combined up to three different livelihood strategies. In fact, the majority of households tended to rely on one or two livelihood strategies, generally with some productive and/or extractive use of natural resources.

I suggest that this was related to the relatively small number of economically active household members resident in the village, given the dispersion of work-seeking *umzi* members, so that labour constraints increasingly, yet somewhat counter-intuitively, posed a challenge to intra-household livelihood diversification (Shackleton *et al.* 2001: 593). Further, much of the livelihood diversification that was in evidence in rural villages seemed to occur at the intersection of the ‘formal sector’ (characterised by the salaries and wages earned by employed people) with the localised, extractive and consumption use of natural resources (as shown in Chapter Four).

APPENDIX TWO:

The ‘cultural politics’ of securing livelihoods in rural Peddie District

The two case-studies that follow demonstrate how fraught people’s attempts to secure their livelihoods can be in the context of economically depressed rural Peddie District. The first case-study deals with a young man’s frustration at being unable to make a contribution to the *ukwakh’umzi* project. The second case-study details the example of a household that stood accused of disregarding the *masincedisane* project between homesteads in Village X.

The case of Zolile Mthi, micro-entrepreneur

Zolile is a 28-year-old man who lives in Hamburg. He lives at home with his widowed and pensioner mother, his 35-year-old, mentally ill brother and his 16-year-old ‘sister’ (actually his sister’s daughter). Zolile completed his schooling in 1993 (with university entrance) and applied to study further at a local university. He heard nothing from the university regarding his application and, apparently lacking the confidence to make further enquiries in this regard, he has watched his chances of gaining entry to any tertiary institution fade with every passing year since then.

In 1999, Zolile went to Port Elizabeth, where he stayed with his sister and her husband, who works as a gardener, in KwaZakhele township. Zolile spent his days going door-to-door in Port Elizabeth, in search of a job. Eventually his search for a job became more passive. He would wait at a particular factory gate from 6h00 to 10h00 with many other men, hoping for someone to come past and recruit some of them as ‘casuals’. On a particularly lucky day, and one that he could distinctly recall, he got four hours of work, from 14h00 to 18h00, that paid R42,00. But breaks like this were few and far between. He found it trying to live with his sister, her husband and their children and he found township life to be dirty and stifling.

Despondent, he returned to Hamburg and immersed himself in his Seventh Day Adventist church activities. This soon included leading youth groups in

Hamburg and the neighbouring villages. Under pressure to contribute materially to his home, he decided to set himself up in a tiny business of buying paraffin and reselling it in the village. Although most of the houses in the village are electrified, many people use paraffin and firewood to cook with, because electricity is regarded as too expensive to use for cooking purposes.

Zolile travelled to Peddie Town two or three times a month, each time he would buy two 20-litre containers of paraffin. Each container cost R51,00 at the time and the round trip R17,00. He decanted the paraffin into smaller bottles which he resold at R3,20 per bottle, which was only slightly cheaper than the local shop in Hamburg. In this way, he made a gross profit of R25,00 per container and after subtracting the cost of the bottles he was left with a profit of just over R11,00. This miniscule amount, he argues, was enough to buy at least a bag of sugar, tea or a 2.5 kg bag of maize meal for his home from each consignment of paraffin. His plan was to branch out into other products in time and he looked to his elderly neighbour, Mr. Mkhaya, who was well-disposed towards him, as a likely source of future finance to expand his business once it was 'known in the village'.

In this way, Zolile felt he was making a contribution to his home under difficult circumstances. Also, by keeping himself busy he was building his family's home in the broader sense, as idleness among young men is seen by older people – and especially by women - as a major source of social delinquency in the village. To this end, he also established a vegetable garden alongside their house which he cultivated enthusiastically. The jeers of other young men at the sight of him working in his garden did not deter him and several older people made a point of passing by his garden, wanting to buy his carrots and other vegetables and encouraging his efforts.

Even with this evidence of his initiative, Zolile felt that he was under constant and unrealistic pressure from his mother to contribute more to the home, because her old-age pension was supporting the whole family. After I had been in Hamburg for a few months, Zolile told me that he had closed down his paraffin business. When I asked why, he explained that because of the tiny margins that he was operating with he had been very careful with his money. This probably means that he had also been quite secretive about the actual

profit he was turning. Not aware of the rather fine line that his business was treading in terms of cash-flow, his mother interpreted his caginess about his finances as evidence of an attempt on his part to hold back some of his profits for himself, and she began to simply take some of his paraffin when her own supply was exhausted, without telling or paying him for it. Almost immediately, he did not have enough money to make the trip to town to buy paraffin and his business collapsed. He told me that he felt betrayed by his mother as he felt that his efforts had been directed at helping her and now she had left him open to ridicule from other men and women and even youngsters who would see him as someone who could not make a success of 'even a paraffin business'.

The weight of cultural expectations II: *masincedisane*

For various reasons, the household of Ma'am Gitywa had gone it alone with respect to its livelihood strategies, specifically its cattle herd accumulation strategies. By this I mean that, comparatively speaking, this wealthy household did not develop what could be expected to be a strong social network or cross-cutting ties of economic reciprocity in the village. In fact, as this Gitywa household prospered over time, they appeared to have largely side-stepped the pressures to share and to help others, at least as required by the *masincedisane* norm.

The case of Ma'am Gitywa's prospering household

Ma'am¹ Gitywa is a widow with four adult children, two daughters and two sons. Having completed 12 years of schooling herself, she is a teacher in the neighbouring village. I interviewed her son, Mandla, several times and came to know him well. He is her third-born child and her eldest son. Mandla's father, who was also a teacher, died in 1971. At the time, the young family (Mandla was 18 months old) was living on the farm of Mandla's father's father in another village. This village, also in Peddie District, is some 25 kms away from their current home.

During his lifetime, Mr. Gitywa had been a keen and successful farmer and it is said that at the time of his death he had accumulated about 50 cattle, over

¹ Pronounced 'mam' as in 'am', this is a term of respect, reserved for woman teachers over a certain age. They are addressed as such by virtually everyone in the village and beyond, except people of similar educational status and age.

100 sheep and some 50 goats, as well as three motorcars and a tractor. In the 1950s or 1960s, he had bought arable land in the fertile village of X. His wife took possession of this land upon his death. Earlier on, Ma'am Gitywa's similarly well-to-do parents had bought a site for her in the same village. In 1975, after conflict with her father-in-law, and as a young widow, Ma'am Gitywa left her late husband's home and moved to Village X. Her father-in-law allowed her to take only four cattle and, since none of the extended family at Xesi knew how to drive, she was also allowed to take the tractor and the three motorcars.

Although her husband had owned land in Village X, she decided to avoid further conflict with the Gitywa family and proceeded to build her house on her own site in the village. She and her children spent several difficult years living in two leaky, corrugated iron buildings. Only as recently as 1984 could they afford to start building the rather more substantial brick-and-mortar house that they currently occupy. Although there are other Gitywa lineages in Village X, Ma'am Gitywa is not close to any of these distant affines, although some of them are said to have helped her when she first arrived there.

In 1985, after the terrible drought that started in 1982-83, the herd that Ma'am Gitywa had started building was reduced to a single heifer. From there, though, the cattle kept by this household began to increase steadily. By 1994, there were 14 cattle in their byre. This was also when Mandla had finished his junior degree (a Bachelor of Agricultural Science) and decided that, since he knew more than anyone else in the household about animal husbandry, he would take charge of the cattle. In the seven years since then, he has lost only three calves and has sold more than 12 animals. Over the same period, the family has also slaughtered three of their animals. During 2000, they bought two cattle for the first time, otherwise their herd has grown entirely as a result of natural increase and in 2001, after selling five cattle, it numbered a substantial 28 animals.

Mandla's success in cattle husbandry, based on his formal agricultural training and knowledge of commercial cattle production principles, not to mention his passion for it, has not been without controversy. Symptomatic of the tension that his remarkable success in building this herd has caused in the village is his use of the village dip-tank. During my fieldwork period, the all-male dipping

committee in the village was rather unhappy with him, ostensibly because he stayed clear of their local dipping programme, which is managed by senior men in the village.

Dipping takes place every Tuesday morning, whether the liquid acaricide in the tank has been replenished or not. But since Mandla is away at work in the town of Komgha [some 120 kms away] during the week, he prefers to use the dipping facilities over the weekend when he returns to the village. This means, however, that his use of the facilities is not supervised by the senior men in the village. In fact, he does not even dip his cattle there, but merely uses the cattle 'race' to restrain his cattle while he sprays them with his own acaricide and injects them against diseases with vaccinations that he has bought in town for his private use on his own herd. He tends to be dismissive of the 'old illiterate man' who is the dipping foreman in the village and the 'troublesome' dipping committee, and correctly argues that the often weak acaricide formula in the dip-tank is likely to create 'super-ticks' that are resistant to the commonly available acaricides. He regards the older men's knowledge and management of the tick problem in the area as seriously lacking and has thus instituted his own tick-control regime. They, on the other hand, accuse him of damaging the cattle race. They have placed a chain across the entrance of the cattle race in an effort to prevent his unauthorised use of the facility. Mandla is adamant that, as a member of this village and 'a tax-payer', he is fully entitled to use the facility at the only time he is able to, i.e. at weekends. I attended a meeting of the cattle-owning men at the dip-tank where the main topic of discussion was how to deal with Mandla's perceived recalcitrance. The dipping committee had already reported the matter to the local police, but they declined to take action against Mandla.

However, some men had taken a different approach. After Mandla had let a cow which had shown signs of recovery from an illness out of his byre to graze, some men in the village came across the animal *etafeni* [on the plateau grazing lands]. They proceeded to slaughter it and consume the meat. This is usually widely regarded as a serious anti-social action which poses a threat to the investments of all cattle-owning households. Mandla knew who the culprits were and reported the matter to the police. However the culprits were all out on 'free bail by the following Monday' and the case has since been 'buried' by the local police department. This caused Mandla to reason to me

that the 'legal system in this country is a joke these days'.

Why, in this case, did these men so completely disregard the normative rules of the game, i.e. that as men of the same village it is virtually inconceivable that they would steal and consume cattle from each other's herds? Mandla's explanation was that his family had never been accepted by the established lineages in the village. He told me that they had always been made to feel like unwelcome guests by some people in the village. My sense was that Ma'am Gitywa's marked success in building her home from her inauspicious beginnings as a newly arrived young widow with four children had powerfully challenged the locally dominant patriarchal order. That she had undertaken the *ukwakh'umzi* project on her own, without being socially (and certainly not economically, given her professional status) under the wing of any senior (male) kinsman in the village, was troubling to the male bearers of this dominant order. Moreover, that her material success, especially latterly, had included building a significant herd of cattle, a quintessential part of the *ukwakh'umzi* project, simply reinforced this and was irksome to many of the senior men who had failed to match this increase in their herd sizes over the same period with their less advanced husbandry techniques. Her neighbours saw Ma'am Gitywa as the household head who continued to oversee this burgeoning success, and they discounted the role of Mandla and his scientific knowledge of cattle production. The senior men in the village in particular simply regarded him as a youth, and an upstart at that.

For their part, the Gitywa household could have helped their cause by, for instance, adopting a strategy of actively cultivating relationships with the households that wield power in the village. This could involve, for instance, seeking to marry their daughters or sons into any of these established families. Nor had they developed strong local networks of support with other homesteads along the lines of *masincedisanɛ*. Ma'am Gitywa was known not to suffer fools gladly and, because of her educated status, cut a somewhat aloof if respected figure in the village. For instance, when the men sent by the dipping committee arrived at their homestead to instruct Mandla and his mother to desist from using the dip-tank facilities, Mandla was away but Ma'am told them in no uncertain terms to go away and not to bother her again with such nonsense.

The fact that her intelligent and assertive young son, Mandla, was also well-educated

(he obtained his Master of Science degree in 2001) and was successfully employed, also proved problematic in the context of the village. The success of this young man gave rise to jealousies among both the less fortunate people and the similarly well-off people whose children had been far less successful than Mandla at securing employment.

My sense, however, was that people in these villages did not automatically despise the success of others, as long as they feel that those who were successful in finding employment actively and unremittingly made efforts to help others around them in the idiom of *masincedisane*. Enormous pressure was brought to bear on people like Mandla to seek out employment opportunities for other youngsters in the village, to the extent that people employed in urban-based jobs were known to actively avoid returning to their home villages, knowing full well that they lacked the means to secure employment in government service for their fellow village youth. Given the chronic uncertainty that surrounded employment and thus livelihoods for rural people these days, this continued to be particularly fraught terrain for social relations in the village.

The interpretations given by my informants of what I have suggested was the affront that the actions of Ma'am and Mandla Gitywa presented to the *masincedisane* norm were rather instructive. Several villagers that I asked about this case commented on the fact that, unlike other owners of big cattle herds in the village, who shared their excess *amasi* [sour milk] with boys from poor families, Ma'am Gitywa sold the excess milk she received from the eight cows which were currently in milch in their byre. The milk that went unsold, it was said, was fed to her pigs. In light of the levels of food deprivation that several households in the village experienced on a daily basis, this was regarded by many people as particularly anti-social behaviour. Such behaviour, several informants told me, constituted an unconscionable act of privatising an important social resource in the village, namely cattle and their products.²

It was also telling that, as Mandla only returned home at weekends, his mother hired a man to herd their animals. However, this man was not from the village and was not

² It was widely acknowledged, however, that it was ritually unsafe for milk and more specifically *amasi* [sour milk] to be shared with people who were not patrilineally related to the household head whose cattle have produced the milk. This related to ideas about kinship taboos. In this light, the feeding of excess milk to pigs was not that uncommon in Peddie District.

even Xhosa-speaking. It was said that he was from another country and resided illegally in South Africa. He had since struck up a relationship with Mandla's sister and they had taken to living in a shack on a site separate from the Gitywa homestead. They were, however, supported by Mandla and his mother in exchange for the daily animal husbandry duties which this man provided. So here too, the family failed, quite probably because they could not trust many of the local men, to provide opportunities for unemployed men in the village to earn an income by assisting with the herding, milking or dipping of their cattle.

This situation was still further exacerbated by the fact that Mandla owned a tractor and ploughed his own fields. Of independent means in this regard, he thus had no need to employ a ploughing team that might be assembled from his own and various other herds around the village. Where he was requested by other people to plough their fields, he was not always in a position to do so, as ploughing his own fields took precedence. Where he did perform this task for others, he entered into competition with other ploughing teams that used cattle to plough, often for a cash payment.

Even owning and selling pigs in the village took on 'class' overtones for the Gitywa family. Mandla complained about the struggle involved in securing payment from people who took pork on credit, which 'makes it a pain to sell pork in the village'. For this reason, it was better to sell on a strictly cash basis only, at the expense of excluding many of the poorer homesteads in the village. Predictably, this also carried a social cost for this Gitywa household.

The actions of the men who slaughtered and consumed the Gitywas' cow and the essentially trumped-up charges of the damage supposedly caused by Mandla to the dip-tank and adjacent facilities constituted clumsy yet, at the same time, explicit attempts by the wider community of Village X to re-assert some moral authority over the errant Gitywa household. In particular, it constituted an attempt to 're-socialise' the Gitywa herd, which was currently the fourth biggest and one of the most productive herds in terms of milk production and increase in the village. Furthermore, Mandla's disrespectful attitude towards the senior men in the village upset several influential men. To curb these perceived excesses, the larger community of Village X resorted to an even more serious sanction, that of limited involvement in the rituals of the Gitywa

homestead. The ritual slaughter events conducted by Ma'am Gitywa's homestead often took place at her deceased husband's home at Xesi, some distance from Village X. As a result, apart from immediate family members, they tended in the main to be poorly attended affairs. Indeed, by performing many of their rituals at a distance from the village, the Gitywa household forewent another culturally potent opportunity to build prestige and their social network among their fellow-villagers in Village X. On one occasion, I witnessed several senior men, who were coming from a beer drink hosted by a neighbour of the Gitywa homestead. These men walked straight past the beer drink taking place at the Gitywa homestead, without so much as acknowledging the (mostly) young men sitting close to the byre in the yard of this homestead. The reason for the Gitywa beer drink? They were thanking their ancestors for the six heifers from a total of eight calves born that summer. Since the senior men had recently spent long hours deliberating Mandla's cheekiness around the dip-tank episode, they were not about to *ukuzimasa* [participate in] his ritual through their presence, nor would they be interested in celebrating his family's good fortune of getting so many new-born heifers.

This case illustrates the extent to which other villagers seek to bring considerable pressure to bear on people who 'lost the plot' and sought to opt out of the normative *masincedisane* relationships. The case-study of the Gitywa household, and that of Zolile Mthi, are but two examples of the daily livelihood struggles that went on within and between households in rural Peddie District. In economically difficult times, constructing 'rural' livelihoods was fraught with jealousies and unrealistic expectations regarding what better-resourced relatives were able to, and thus should, provide. The resentment and frustration that were built up by these day-to-day struggles over time could and at times did lead to instances of domestic violence and accusations of witchcraft.

APPENDIX THREE:

Livelihoods in the 'informal sector' engaged in by sampled households in Loverstwist and Hamburg

Table 1. 'Informal sector' livelihoods in Loverstwist (n=30) and Hamburg (n=60).

LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITY	LOVERSTWIST	HAMBURG
Tractor/truck driver	3 cases	Nil
Domestic worker	2 cases	6 cases
Run an <i>isirhoxo</i> (shop)	3 cases	1 case
Transport people/goods around	1 case	Nil
Cattle herdsman	1 case	Nil
Abalone project	Nil	8 cases
Oyster project	Nil	2 cases
Labour at the hotel/village	Nil	2 cases
Builder or builder's labourer	Nil	3 cases
Gardener/Watchman	Nil	2 cases
Collect firewood for sale	Nil	4 cases
'Jobbing' for ESKOM	Nil	2 cases
'Jobbing' for TELKOM	Nil	1 case
Plough for people	Nil	6 cases
Do other people's laundry	Nil	1 case
Repair windows	Nil	1 case
Sell marijuana ('dagga')	Nil	1 case
Sewing/crochet work	Nil	2 cases
Brickmaking	Nil	1 case
Waitress in the local hotel	Nil	1 case
Decorate pots with shells for sale	Nil	1 case
Shop attendant	Nil	1 case
Slaughter pigs to sell pork	Nil	1 case
General H/hold helper/messenger	Nil	1 case
Harvest medicinal plants for sale	Nil	1 case
TOTAL	10 cases	47 cases

APPENDIX FOUR:

The 'rands and cents' of livelihoods in Loverstwiist and Hamburg ca.2001

In 2001, an old-age pension was worth R540,00 per month. Later during the year, it increased to R570,00 per month. The child support grant was R100,00 per month.

An estimated 70% of the potential labour force in Peddie District was unemployed. This helps to explain why about 91% of the households in the district earned R1,500 per month or less, while only 9% earned more than R1,500 per month – the price of one heifer in 2001 (Ngqushwa IDP 2002). Monde (2003) found that the mean monthly household incomes in the two villages she studied were R747 and R1,071 respectively. She also found that the 'ultra-poor' households in the two villages spent 75% of their monthly income on buying food. At the same time, Møller and Ferreira (2003: 52) note that their sample of 374 'rural black households in the Eastern Cape' had a mean total monthly household income of R965. This probably mirrored the overall situation in Hamburg and Loverstwiist, although both villages had a number of households that had no income whatsoever.

Mrs. Makiso paid R220,00 for the household's field to be ploughed by tractor.

The hire purchase instalments of the Mnqosini household amounted to R820,00 per month. The newly-installed, glass-fibre pit latrine cost them R595,00.

A heifer bought from neighbouring white farmers cost between R1,200 and R1,800 during 2001. A full-grown ox fetched between R2,200 and R3,000 at the stock sale. In March 2001, a sheep bought in the town of Berlin cost R400,00. A young goat ewe, where one could be found for sale, cost around R400,00 in the villages of Peddie District.

In Hamburg, people working on the roads rehabilitation project got paid a daily wage of R43,00, making R860,00 for a month's work. The 3 women and one man working on the water piping project in Loverstwiist in November 2001, each received R56/day, or about R600 per fortnight.

At the height of the abalone harvesting, men in Hamburg were earning R1,500 per week.

School fees at St. Charles Sojola SSS is R50,00 per learner per year.

Bra Majay got R5,00 for each broom he made. *Bawo' uCirha* fixed people's three-legged pots for R10,00 a time. MaTshezi sold her seashell-decorated pots for R50,00-R80,00 each.

Between 1997 and 1999, Themba Natazo handed over R400 a month to his mother and sisters as a contribution to household expenditure.

Damages for impregnating a girl of R500,00 was paid in Hamburg. The P.E.-based father of Nonzukiso Mongemali's child contributed R150,00 a month towards the child's upbringing.

One young woman who owned a *shebeen* in Phola Park informed me that her business usually cleared R700,00 a month, which was about the same as the three other *shebeens* in close by. A bottle of Viceroy brandy, which was popular for presenting to hosts at rituals, cost R40,00.

Mthozamile Raduma owned 56 head of cattle in 2001. At an average value of R1,800 per animal, this meant that he had just over R100,000 'on the hoof', which was a very considerable amount of money in the context of rural Peddie District.

In October 2001, it cost R40,00 return to travel by taxi from Loverstwist to East London and it cost R14,00 return to Peddie from Loverstwist (add R10,00 from Hamburg). Concrete building blocks sold in the village cost R2.60 each.

In Loverstwist, Mrs. H. Mgaba (whose husband was away working on the mines) paid the elderly man, Reni Gedze, R100/month to look after the Mgaba cattle (Mr. Gedze was of pensionable age, but not in receipt of a pension).

Cattle holders in Hamburg objected to each *umzi* having to pay R20,00 towards the cost of purchasing dip, when some of them had 2 or 3 cattle and others had 20 or more cattle.

The value of the total herd of cattle in the reserve areas of Peddie District in 1998 was estimated at R40 million, or just over R655 per capita.

APPENDIX FIVE:

Some herd structure and production indices for Loverstwist and Hamburg

Table 1. Some production indices for cattle-holdings in Loverstwist (n=47) and Hamburg (n=101) for the calendar year 2000.¹

PRODUCTION INDEX	L'TWIST	% OF TOTAL	HAMBURG	% OF TOTAL
Total herd size	266 (270)	-	1,037 (1,048)	-
H/holds with cattle	47	-	101	-
Average holdings	5,7		10,4	
Bulls in overall herd	14	5	34	3,3
Oxen in overall herd	59	22	293	28
Heifers in overall herd	109	41	396	38
Cows >4yrs	52	20	186	18
Male followers	11	4	73	7
Female followers	21	8	55	5
All calves born in 2000	66		315	
Calves 3 mnths+ but not all weaned	53		294	
Cattle bought	1		27	
Cattle sold	15		23	
Cattle exchanged	3		3	
Lost to disease	28		57	
Lost to stocktheft	3		3 (2 rec)	

¹ One senior man in Hamburg supplied information on only half of his herd. Information on the other 11 animals that he held was thus not available to me and are consequently not factored into this table. Similarly, in Loverstwist the household with the biggest herd in the village refused to participate in the herd survey. The household with the second biggest herd had sent four cattle to a neighbouring village and they are not accounted for here either.

APPENDIX SIX:

Locations of absent household members in 2001

Table 1. Locations of the absent members of sampled households in Loverstwiist and Hamburg in 2001 (though not necessarily employed there)

Location (total people)	LT no cattle (21 H/holds)	LT with cattle (9 H/holds)	H'burg no cattle (31 H/holds)	H'burg with cattle (29 H/holds)
Johannesburg (9)	6	3	-	-
Cape Town (21)	2	-	12	7
Durban (5)	-	1	-	4
Port Elizabeth (34)	2	3	11	18
East London (34)	9	10	8	7
E.Cape town (20)	4	1	3	12
Peddle District (15)	3	3	3	6
TOTAL (138)	26	21	37	54

APPENDIX SEVEN:

Changes in the rural cultural economy? A biographical approach to cattle husbandry by younger men

...[W]e know too little about these processes [of material and social differentiation within bantustan populations over the past twenty or thirty years] because most research to date has focused on the obvious fact of the generalisation of marginality and impoverishment amongst the masses in the bantustans. There is urgent need to understand not merely the dominant trend towards general impoverishment, but also its unevenness (Sharp 1994: 72-3)

Introduction

In this Appendix, I use the biographical case-study method to examine the ‘unevenness’ of economic and social difference between people in rural Peddie District and to explore the cultural politics that arose from these differences. As in Chapter Six, I use cattle-owning *men* and the households they headed as my primary point of reference.

The significant socio-economic differentiation between households in the villages of Peddie District was structurally mediated. The economic fate of households headed by senior men (aged 65 years and over), for instance, was virtually sealed by the time they retired to the village. They had either accumulated sufficient bovine and cash resources and instilled in (at least some of) their children the importance of the *ukwakh’ umzi* ideology, or they had not. There was not a great deal that could be achieved once they were back in the village to radically change this economic trajectory or the social (i.e. intra-household and intra-village) and cultural spaces (especially relating to gender practices and ritual observances) that they inhabited and over which they exercised a measure of influence.

What emerged from my detailed interviews with cohorts of younger men was the considerable extent to which socio-economic differentiation can be linked to the varied life experiences and different cultural politics of successive generations of individual adult men and women. It emerged, for example, that, while some men had quite consciously stuck to one or two jobs through their working lives, other men had

moved between jobs with greater frequency. Their more intermittent periods of work were punctuated by at-times longer periods of unemployment and this uneven employment record showed up in their projects of *homestead consolidation*. Of course, other factors such as educational levels in the household, a spouse's employment history and the relative success of adult children in securing employment, as well as how the household had weathered misfortune, also had a significant bearing on these projects of consolidation.¹

My interviews threw up numerous examples of men in the younger age cohorts of less than 53 years who appeared (and were said by others) to have achieved greater economic success than more senior men. In a rural social context in which senior men had historically dominated social interaction between people and households, this phenomenon had a real impact on the everyday relations between different generations of men. It also affected the relations between men and women in rural households.

Not that any of this was particularly new, however. This situation had played out repeatedly and with intermittently stronger effects, over much of the twentieth century as changes in the macro-economy and political landscape dampened or accelerated urban-based employment opportunities, with a knock-on effect for the fortunes of rural households (see Murray 1981a; Sharp 1994; Mager 1992). Moreover, the observable pattern, which was most pronounced before the post-1992 increase in value of old-age pensions, was one of deteriorating household economic security for many older people in rural areas, particularly for those whose children had failed to secure regular employment and were thus not contributing reliably to their homes (Manona 1980a; Jones 1996). Nor had this situation improved markedly for the large percentage of households over the past decade, although higher rainfall had contributed to increased wealth in cattle in these rural villages and modes of *dominant* livelihoods have shifted.

Male household heads aged 53 to 64 years: Holding the line in difficult times

Although the situation varied from case to case, the age cohort 53 to 64 years for male household heads included men who had held onto the same jobs since the late 1970s.

¹ As Sharp (1994: 77) points out, creating and maintaining stability or a secure base within the rural homestead, tended to generate larger flows of remitted wage income from migrant workers who chose to remain attached to such households, thereby compounding their opportunities for successful accumulation (see Krüger 1998).

Often, these were jobs that they secured in towns and cities in the province. Local municipalities were one particularly reliable, if scarce, source of long-term (up to 20 and even 30 years) employment. This extended length of employment, albeit at low yet reliable levels of remuneration, had allowed these households to achieve an at times notable degree of incremental economic accumulation over this period (De Wet 1995b).²

To be sure, structural and political change in the form of juggernauts such as apartheid government-led betterment planning schemes or the economically devastating forced removals and resettlements derailed the domestic arrangements and the accumulation projects of many households in the former reserves (see Deliwe 1997; De Wet 1995a). Households that managed to avoid the worst effects of these incursions were often able to secure for themselves a relatively comfortable position in the social and economic milieu of the village. By the late 1970s, the expansion of the Ciskei bantustan civil service opened up more opportunities for the men (and women) who had the necessary minimum educational qualifications (Peires 1992; De Wet & Holbrook 1997). For those households with members who were fortunate enough to be employed in steady, often unionised,³ wage-employment, the increase in real wages since the mid-1980s further substantially improved their economic position, deepening economic and social cleavages between them and other villagers (Coughlan 1997: 157; De Wet & Leibbrandt 1991).

However, the South African economy underwent major structural changes during the 1990s and 'jobs for life' effectively became a thing of the past. Many of these men now found themselves in an untenable position in respect of their future work prospects. On the whole, most of the men in the 53-64 years age category who were resident in Hamburg and Loverstwiist had already experienced retrenchment and were reliant on remittances, on local part-time jobs and on their cattle herds. A few more fortunate individuals were rapidly nearing the end of their careers as regularly employed workers. They were having to look to rural possibilities of securing their

² Sharp (1994: 76) points out that all the case studies conducted in *Qwaqwa* in the 1980s pointed to the 'critical importance of a source of income that was reliable [i.e. dependable and regular] over time. The presence or absence of such an income was the major cause of inequality amongst closer settlement households.....[and it] had long-term implications.'

³ Although unions were not permitted in the former Ciskei, they grew steadily in centres like East London and Port Elizabeth in the 1980s (Southall 1997).

livelihood in future. This would involve investing their savings and any retirement pay-outs that might be due to them in rural income-generating schemes of one sort or another.

My data show that it was indeed the period between the termination of their last formal job and the time when the male household head qualified for an old-age pension at age 65 years that could be a rather economically lean and socially trying one for the male household heads in this age cohort. This was when their particular patriarchal accumulation project was belatedly most vulnerable. Obviously, most of the older people I encountered in the villages of Peddie District had made a decision to continue investing resources in a rural homestead and were not likely, at this stage of their lives, to seriously contemplate moving and settling permanently in towns and cities elsewhere. Indeed, Bank (1997b: 21) speculates that most of those who left the rural areas for urban centres (including the mushrooming informal settlements adjacent to small towns) after the repeal of 'influx control' legislation in 1986, had already done so by 1995. He suggests that, for a number of reasons, rural-to-urban migration within the province had slowed down by this time.⁴

In the section that follows, I present the personal narratives of Madoda Bikitsha and Mziwakhe Daliso as representative of men in this 53 to 64-year-old age cohort. Neither of these men managed to secure the elusive long-term job, and had instead held down several jobs over the course of their employed lives. I reflect on their particular circumstances and situate their narratives in the broader social projects of rural men, specifically the *ukwakh'umzi* [building the homestead] project.

⁴ He suggests, however, that 'since the early 1990s, rural migrants [have been] bypassing East London for Cape Town and Gauteng' in search of better economic prospects. My data from Peddie District seem not to support this. A new wave of farmworker dismissals in the late 1990s, saw many small towns swamped by new arrivals, many of whom brought their livestock to town with them.

The case of Madoda Bikitsha (about 58 years old), Loverstwit, the head of a household with 12 cattle.

I bought my first cow in 1962, but it was [my contribution to] my father's kraal. In 1978, my father passed away and his cattle fell to me. Since then, I have [always] had cattle, but some have died and others I have sold. I keep cattle because cattle are the bank of the *amaXhosa*. Cattle are also the medicine of the Xhosa man. I sell cattle if there is a circumcision that will happen [in my household or extended family] or when we are hungry and have no food. I do not have a bank account, because I am not working. If I was working, I would open an account. It is wise to have both cattle and a bank account. As it is, it is better [for me] to have cattle in the kraal because if you keep your money in the bank and you are not working, after a while you will have drawn all your money and they will close your account. If you don't keep putting money into the bank, this is what they do.

As a cattle-owner, I am respected by other people. Another thing that can get you respect from others is age. If you are old, you have to be respected [by those younger than you]. Another thing is the state you're in: if you are disciplined [in respect of your general behaviour and specifically alcohol consumption], people will respect you for that...

[Turning to] my sons, they respect the cattle [I have] here very well. It will be just a matter of work. If they can find work, the cattle will be here forever. I look after my cattle myself as I do not work now. I milk two cows and get about three litres of milk a day. My milk and sour milk are for consumption by my relatives only and not for other people [unless] they eat it here and wash the bowl here. If I sell a cow, I try to buy another one to replace it. My wife and I first discuss selling cattle, we don't just sell them. I may sell one animal to save others, to buy dip and other medicines, but the remaining money I will keep [separate]. I may also sell one animal to buy [fodder] during drought.

I can use my cattle to pay *lobolo* [bridewealth] for my son, but he has to pay my cattle back bit by bit, like one animal per year, until he has finished paying them all back to me.

For both male and female household heads in this age category, Madoda's relatively precarious livelihood position was not exceptional. He had a Sub-standard B education (2 years of formal schooling). He and his wife also had four children. At the time of the interview he was without work and his prospects of finding regular employment again were not good. He was still seven years away from receipt of an old age pension. Not surprisingly, he was carefully managing his household's herd of cattle to strengthen his financial position, while also keeping on the look-out for any employment opportunities.

But Madoda could testify to the fact that building one's herd was subject to social pressures, as well as domestic demands for food and clothing. The year prior to our interview, Madoda's sister had died. As the eldest son of their natal *umzi* [home], and by virtue of inheriting his father's herd, Madoda was the guardian and chief benefactor of his siblings and their children. For his sister's funeral, Madoda had provided the cow to be slaughtered from his own byre. This responsibility of providing the animal to slaughter at her funeral would have been her husband's, had he been alive, but in his absence Madoda was obliged to step in.

A key challenge for men in Madoda's position, then, was to ensure that the younger members of their households had the best possible chance of finding employment. This was something that men like Madoda, with their often limited knowledge of the 'new economy', tried to ensure by paying for their children's tertiary education, often by selling cattle at the stocksale to do so. There were numerous examples of them paying the costs of their children's enrollment into fly-by-night 'computer colleges' in town in the hope that this would enable them to find jobs more easily. Success stories that resulted from taking this route were extremely rare – particularly as employers took basic computer proficiency for granted, no matter how many years of 'computer studies' or glossy certificates from a 'computer college' were produced by job-seekers. But that did not dissuade desperate poorly educated rural youth who had little hope of gaining admission to the formal tertiary sector (universities and technikons) from following this route.

Shouldering the costs of a formal post-secondary education was only part of the challenge for men like Madoda and their wives. Should their offspring find

employment, they also needed to be reminded of two things that had been drummed into them from an early age. Firstly, they needed to be mindful, given their new-found employed status, that they were morally obliged to remit cash home to support their parents and younger siblings. This was relatively simple, as employment everywhere became increasingly casualised and people's distrust of the market domain was reinforced by the misfortune and embarrassment of regular retrenchment and dismissal. Secondly, they needed to be persuaded that it was in their interests to convert some of the money they earned into cattle for the long-term benefit of the homestead. As we will see in the case-studies that follow, investing in cattle was more palatable to first-born sons than to younger sons and daughters.

The potency of the whole notion of making a contribution to *building the home* was tested afresh in every situation of this nature. Once their sons and daughters, in their twenties or early thirties, had moved away from home to set up their own homesteads, the moral imperative for them to build the natal home was obviously weakened. With some exceptions, the principle of primogeniture still applied to the inheritance of livestock, but it was increasingly being tested by other siblings, including adult, unmarried or separated daughters who might have made considerable cash and in-kind contributions to the homestead over time.

The looming old-age pensions threshold was frequently uppermost in this age cohort's economic strategizing, but the timing of retrenchments, dismissals and even retirement were to all intents and purposes beyond their control. In the rural villages of Peddie District and elsewhere, there were many examples of impoverished households headed by men and women in this age cohort who were retrenched, or who failed to get the timing of their retirement from formal employment right, insofar as they had any control over this in the shrinking job market. By this I mean that their retirement should coincide with the time when their offspring had managed to secure employment and had begun to remit funds home on a regular basis.

As I suggest above, another challenge for men in Madoda's position related to their ability to selectively fend off demands on their herd originating from relatives who needed to conduct rituals, and particularly funerals. They had to deal with these requests with great skill and diplomacy, as these emotionally fraught times were

potentially rich sources of misunderstanding and acrimony. Where support in terms of supplying beasts for slaughter was unavoidable, the preferred option was to seek to exchange an animal (for example, giving an ox or old cow suitable for slaughter in exchange for a heifer) with the bereaved party, so that the reproductive capacity of their own herd was not compromised.

Alternatively, they might feel obliged by the *masincedisane* [let us help each other] norm to sell some of their animals to more distant kinsmen or fellow villagers at roughly market-related prices, with the hope that they would subsequently be able to replace the animal sold by buying in another animal. At worst, as in Madoda's case, they would be expected to step in and simply provide, free of charge, the animal required for slaughter. The alternative, for Madoda, was to save his cattle but risk the social stigma of having fellow villagers comment not only on the poverty of his deceased sister's family, but also on his stinginess, which was a grave insult in the social milieu of the village. My point here is not to stress how much Madoda's life was complicated by holding cattle.⁵ On the contrary, cattle were an important resource that constitute the wherewithal through which men like Madoda engage socially with other people and households in the village. Exchanges, loans and even sales of cattle were important instruments of associational village life, helping to build and sustain relationships between people and households, both within the village on the one hand, and between village residents and their kin who were away in the cities on the other hand.

Another man in the same predicament as Madoda was Mziwakhe Daliso, aged 54 years, of Hamburg. When I interviewed him, he owned three cattle. Mziwakhe was related to several respected families in the village, and could frequently be found in the company of the more senior men in the village, discussing community matters. Although not particularly well educated, he was astute and worldly-wise and he served on several village committees, including the Governing Body of the local secondary school and the Hamburg Development Forum. As an active church-going man of sober habits, he was held in high regard by many other men and women of his age and older in the village.

⁵ Sansom (1981: 104) suggests that the *stokfel* (rotating credit association) member – much as the cattle holder in Peddie District – 'complicates his life precisely so that he can bemuse those who appeal to him on moral grounds'.

Mziwakhe Daliso (54 years of age) of Hamburg village

I am Mziwakhe Daliso. My father was born in 1910 in Hamburg. His father had come from Engcobo in the Transkei. We are *Dlamini* [clan]. My grandfather arrived in Hamburg in 1901 and took a wife from the Nxadi family. Their three sons lived at their father's *umzi* [home] and then the first-born, Bhuti, moved to eNtilini [a nearby settlement]. Later Thizo, the other brother, moved to the [main] village in Hamburg.

My mother was also from Hamburg. She was the sister of the father of Strongman Ngoba. She was chosen as a wife for my father by his father. They were married in about 1932. My mother was much younger than my father. He had worked in Cape Town all his life and then returned to Hamburg. My mother never worked and always stayed in Hamburg. I am the first-born of my father's four children. [We were] two sons and two daughters.

I was born in 1947. I left school in 1965. In 1966, I stayed at home [at first] and then in 1967, I started working in the gold mines at Springs for two years. Then I changed to Doornfontein mine. In 1970, I came home and stayed at home. In 1971, I went to work in a Germiston coal factory for two years. Then I came back home. I was buying cattle during this time. The first ox I bought was from Mr. Ngqula in Hamburg. I wasn't a Christian then, so I bought an ox in case my father died, so I would be able to slaughter it. In 1975, I went to work on Virginia gold mine. I worked there between 1975 and 1980. In 1976, I went to the bush [to be circumcised] aged 29 years, which was very old, hey? In 1977 I was married. I was supposed to go to the bush in about 1969, but the dances were too good, and I had too many girlfriends there...

My father selected my *Mosotho* [Sesotho-speaking] wife in Mdantsane. Her parents and family were in East London. At the time my wife was being chosen for me, I was working in Johannesburg, in the gold mine called Deal Kraal in Carletonville and living in a hostel. I was sending money to my father. [My negotiators – including my father and Mr. Mkhaya – learned that] my wife's father wanted nine cattle, with each cow worth R600 at the time. They said that they would have to check with

me, as I was away at the time. I decided to pay in cash as finding cattle here, there and everywhere would be difficult. In 1977, four cattle were paid by my father and Mr. Mkhaya. Then in 1979 I paid the five remaining cattle in a second payment.

At the time, I would come home once every 12 months. When I came home after paying the full *lobolo*, my father simply said to me, 'there is your wife', and pointed to some young girls. I was 30 and my wife was 19 years old when we were married.

In 1981, I stopped working at the gold mine. Since then, in the period 1981 to 1995, I worked in East London and [mostly] lived with my family in Mdantsane. For 1981-1988, I worked for Van Zummeren Contractors and in the last three years, I was a foreman there. In 1988, the firm closed down and I came back to Hamburg, leaving my wife and children in Mdantsane.

In 1992 to 1995, I worked in East London, at Alford Radio and T.V. We worked on everything...car radios, televisions and air-conditioners. In 1995, I came home to Hamburg [with my family] again and I have stayed here since then. I now have a job as the night watchman at the Hamburg Hotel. I work two nights a week (Sunday and Monday) and I have recently started to work on Saturday nights as well. It doesn't pay [much], but it is something.

I have another house, besides this one in Hamburg, in Mdantsane, which I bought during the time that we lived there. I have someone living there, but not paying rent, just looking after my things that are still in the house. I have six children, four sons and two daughters. The first two were born before I was married, and the last four are from my wife. I want my children to share my property when I die, including my house in Mdantsane. I don't like the way our fathers left their things to one son only, making other children move out and look after themselves.

In terms of securing his livelihood, Mziwakhe Daliso's problem, like that of Madoda, was a structural one. At the relatively young age of 53 years and with four children still attending school, he was without regular work and had no reliable income. This in spite of the skills and experience he built up over the years of employment in various contexts. His wife was also unemployed. Instead, they had to be satisfied with the unreliable and poorly paid jobs on offer around the village. The part-time security job he had negotiated at the Hamburg Hotel just before our first interview in February 2001 was one of these. At the time of our second interview, in May of the same year, the hotel in Hamburg had closed down and he had found part-time work as a security guard at the local restaurant. Later in the same year, he was one of a few men from Hamburg fortunate to be employed by Telkom, the telecommunications parastatal company. The team was employed on a short-term contract to refurbish the telephone lines that run along the main coastal road between Port Elizabeth and East London. The job was due to last only four months, but paid relatively well.

Partly because of his long absence from the village, Mziwakhe had not built up a herd of cattle. Since returning to Hamburg with his family, he had spent his money and time building a new 'American'-style house. This rectangular house with a distinctively pitched corrugated-iron roof, was the latest fashion in house construction in Peddie District and elsewhere in the Eastern Cape (see Fay 2003). The upshot of this commitment was that Mziwakhe only had three cattle in his byre. With his three young sons at school, he did much of whatever animal husbandry work was required himself. He was intent on building up his herd and proved eager, on several occasions, to tap my limited knowledge of cattle production, requesting that I should try to muster whatever outside institutional resources I could to support local cattle production efforts.

If the cases of the two cattle-owners, Madoda Bikitsha and Mziwakhe Daliso, look relatively bleak, they were nevertheless starkly in contrast with the truly desperate predicament of Bra MaJay, one of many men in rural Peddie District who did not own cattle.

Life on the edge: The case of Bra MaJay Mati, 54 years old

My father, Jack, was born at Xesi [Ngcabasa village]. Our clan is *Mpinga*. He worked on a pineapple farm in Peddie District on the farm of De Klerk. I was born on the farm across the Mtana River [adjacent to Hamburg] where my parents had moved to. I was born in 1947, the third child in the family. The farm had a dairy in which my father worked. My father had 8 cattle [of his own] on the farm. I had six brothers and twin sisters. One sister now lives at *eNtilini* [close to Hamburg] and the other one in East London. Three of my brothers are in Port Elizabeth and another in East London. Two of my brothers have died. The one died in 1974 and the other one, who was living here with me, in November 1999.

We moved to Hamburg in 1966, when the farmer sold everything and told my father to '*hamba, ndiyathengisa ifama*' [leave, I'm selling the farm]. My father and mother arrived here with nine children and eight cattle. I was not educated, because the farmer wanted us to herd his calves and milk the cows. All of us are uneducated (with no schooling at all) except the twins, who got as far as Std.3 (five years of schooling) here in Hamburg Primary, as they were still small when we arrived here.

In Hamburg, my father got a job building stone walls at the hotel. My mother didn't work, but stayed at home. All the boys were working. Some helped on the stone walls at the hotel, some worked at the old shop owned by a white man.

On 26 June 1970, I went to the bush to be circumcised. After four months, on 18 October 1970, I came out and my father slaughtered a cow. Then in 1971 I went to the mines at Dannhauser in Natal. I went there for 6 months, and then came home in 1972. I returned to the mines in 1973. Then I came home and worked in East London, working for Murray and Stewart for 4 months. Then I went to work for Fisant Construction in East London. In 1974, I came home [to Hamburg] and worked for Strongman Ngqula making building blocks as a casual [labourer] and getting very little money. I did this until 1977. During the late 1970s to 1990s, I have not worked, except for jobs like the water installation project [1999], and odd jobs around the village.

On 24 June 1979, my mother died. My father died in 1996. When we arrived here, my father's cattle increased to 14, then they died in the drought. By 1985, only 5 were left. Some of these cattle were slaughtered, [for example] for my mother's funeral, for *imigidi* [celebrations, especially those held after a young man comes back from circumcision] and so on. All the remaining cattle died in 1994, after the drought of that time. Some of my brothers bought cattle, but these cattle also died in the drought. The three brothers who live in P.E. all work on the *chokka* [squid] fishing boats at sea. They don't come home much and they don't send money home to me at all. They all came home for the funeral of our brother in 1999. Also the brother of my father came from KwaHoyi [village] for the funeral.

I cook for myself at home. I have no wife. I left my 'wife' and 3 children, including twins, in Ladysmith in KwaZulu/Natal. She married another man afterwards. Women aren't interested in men who don't work, they say, "what will we eat?" Before, my sisters would send me food, but they are suffering now [too] and don't send me anything. My brother in East London [Mdantsane] is jobbing and cannot help either. When will I start to get my pension? [In 11 years' time, I tell him...].

We haven't done the *ukukhapa* [to accompany the spirit of the dead man] ritual for our father yet. There is no money to buy a cow, but this ritual is very necessary. We need to slaughter a cow or a goat for my mother also, to *piwa inkobe* [a gift of maize for a deceased woman] for her.

I couldn't get a job on the current roads upgrading project in Hamburg, because they said that I had been employed on the water project before. I don't want to, and cannot go anyway, to Port Elizabeth or East London to look for work, because I have to look after the *khaya* [home] here.

Interviewer: do you think you will buy cattle sometime?

BM: Yes, when I get my pension I will get some.

Interviewer: Why?

BM: It is necessary that there are cattle at home, even for doing rituals that are not yet done.

Bra MaJay, at the age of 54 years, was in spectacularly bad shape. A small-framed man, MaJay's appearance was of someone at least ten years older. More drunk than sober, he admitted that he had a problem in this regard, saying that he used to have a white (pale) skin, like his mother, but that *utywala* [beer] had caused his skin to blacken. MaJay lived alone and, contrary to what he said during our interview, he did not cook for himself, but ate his meals at the home of Mr. Mkhaya (my host in Hamburg).

Mr. Mkhaya paid him to carry water for his vegetable garden, clean out his chicken run and run errands around the village for him. His payment seemed to consist mostly of his getting good meals at the Mkhaya homestead on the days when he actually reported for work. He also received occasional small amounts of money from the 'Xhosa' brooms which he made and sold for R5-00, which was roughly the price of one bottle of beer. In making brooms for sale, he fell below the norm of what was expected of a Xhosa man, as this task was usually viewed as 'women's work'.

On a number of occasions during my fieldwork, MaJay absconded after being sent to buy sugar or similar at the local shop. He would be tracked down to the liquor-store or a shebeen in the village, and make his way back to the Mkhaya residence to be admonished and sometimes even beaten with a stick by old Mr. Mkhaya. This was unusual, as beating was something that was done quite rarely these days, and then only to uncircumcised boys.

A man with no local kin network and few close friends, MaJay was nevertheless jovial and quick-witted (when sober) and was a mine of information on local genealogies, as he knew literally everyone, even the young children in the village. This was probably because he could always to be found at beer-drinks and rituals around the village, where such information was shared and discussed in casual conversation.

Critically though, MaJay did not '*zimele*' [stand alone as a man]. He existed in the shadow of his patron, Mr. Mkhaya. With Bra MaJay, Mr. Mkhaya's young grandchildren and their friends would virtually abandon any sign of the respect towards an older man that was *de rigueur* in this rural context. Nor did any of the

adults around them scold them for their teasing of MaJay, their shouting after him and their playing practical jokes on him. Even the name by which he was known suggests informality. The 'Bra' was derived from the *tsotsi-taal* [the 'hip' slang originally the preserve of township gangsters] for 'brother'. In the case of MaJay, this appellation replaced the more formal and respectful '*bhuti*' by which all men expected to be addressed, specifically where the speaker was a child, a woman or a man younger than themselves. To all intents, his behaviour did not meet rural villagers' expectations of a Xhosa man and, while he was tolerated and included, he enjoyed little respect from other people in the village.

He, like everyone else, was supposed to uphold the reputation of his patrilineal homestead in the village. This was done, in the first instance, by keeping the physical structure in good repair, as far as resources allow. The reputation of the homestead was further enhanced by the actions and social standing of its resident and non-resident members.

Villagers pointed out that the Mati homestead was in a particularly dilapidated state. The homestead was perched uncomfortably on the edge of someone else's otherwise vacant residential site, right alongside the dusty village 'street'. Since the household had no livestock, MaJay did not bother to maintain a byre adjacent to the unfenced dwellings. The mud-and-sapling dwellings were a mode of construction that denoted the low economic status of the household among Xhosa-speakers (Cocks & Wiersum 2003: 50). This social stigma could, however, be partially overcome through careful maintenance and incremental renovation, such as plastering and white-washing or painting over mud walls. Although all buildings that made up people's homesteads needed regular maintenance, the dwellings that comprised the Mati homestead were collapsing because of a lack of maintenance on MaJay's part. Latterly, this process of decay had been hastened by MaJay himself who took to selling off sections of corrugated iron roofing from one outbuilding to survive and to feed his drinking habit. His brothers were effectively *amatshipa* [people who had left the village and played little or no role in building their home]. Most of them lived the hard life of fishermen socially remote from the village home, while his sisters were not in a position to help him with the upkeep of the home. Rather than building the homestead, MaJay was literally drinking the *umzi* [home] out of existence.

Abject as his existence seemed, however, MaJay was not alone in failing to live up to the Xhosa ideal of a husband and father's role as that of *intsika yekhaya* [the pillar of the home]. In this respect, the predicament of someone like Manene in Loverstwit was similarly bleak.

Manene, a man without cattle

I have been unemployed for 18 years. During this time, and even now, I have been supported by my wife. There were cattle in my [natal] home, but these cattle died in 1949. I had some cattle [of my own], but my cattle also died. I have never owned a goat. My cattle died because of drought and disease. I don't have a bank account but I did have one before. I used all the money that was there. I do not work now. I am interested in buying cattle, but the problem is that I do not work.

I don't have a field. I mean, to have a field you need to have some money in the pocket. I do have a garden in my [homestead] site. I cultivate this garden using a hoe. I [recently] planted *mealies* [maize] and they are growing nicely. I don't put manure on the garden. If I need manure for making *mqombothi* [traditional beer], I go around the grazing camp and collect the dry manure and crush it to make manure. This is because I don't have cattle. I do have a relative in the village who can give me manure but it can be very complicated [to follow this route] because of family problems. If I want to conduct *umsebenzi* [a ritual], I have to go out to the stocksale or buy cattle [from] anywhere so that I can conduct the work.

To be respected in the community you have to be a cattle-owner, [hence] I don't get respect. Even when you talk, people will not pay attention to you at all. [Another way] you can get respect, in Xhosa culture...depends on your age. All those younger must respect you, [and] you must respect those older in return.

I don't think my son will buy cattle because young children these days are not controllable at all, and I can't see him owning cattle. If I look at the young men of my village, I don't see them possessing cattle [in future].

I need to have goats because goats are very important. There are many *imisebenzi* [rituals] you can do with goats. I can also do many things with cattle like traditional work and selling [some of them] to make money. The kraal with cattle is a moving bank. If I compare the bank and the kraal, I think the kraal is the better thing, because if you have money in the bank, you can withdraw it anytime, but having cattle in the kraal, you can't just sell [them] without very important reasons. You can also pay *lobola* [bridewealth] with these cattle. A Xhosa home needs cattle to be recognised in our culture.

Manene made tiny amounts of money by fashioning walking sticks from the wood that he cut in the forest. He sold these sticks to other men in Loverstwest and the neighbouring villages. He lived alone, as his wife was employed as a domestic worker in another village and his children lived with an elderly neighbour of his. This neighbour was a widowed pensioner, and his children helped her with domestic chores in exchange for food.

Manene had the ceremonial job of *injoli* at ritual beer-drinks, which involved overseeing the adequate and timely distribution of the beer, brandy and meat among the different gender and generational categories of people in the village who were present at every ritual occasion. I picked up murmurs among some residents that Manene's hands were 'too dirty for this job' – a literal reference to his increasingly unkempt state and his low status in the village – and that the community would soon have to choose some other man to do the work of *injoli*. Given that people came from far and wide, including from cities and neighbouring villages, to the many ritual functions in the village, this sentiment was also a small but telling expression of class-based sensitivities about the image that the village projected to outsiders. Manene was clearly slipping below the threshold of what was regarded as 'poor but decent' by village standards. His public role at ritual events, where he might actually handle meat, was of growing concern to more health and class-conscious people who felt that Manene's physical appearance might constitute a health-risk and threaten to embarrass the village in general (see Gitywa 1976: 156).

The condensed personal narratives of MaJay and Manene describe men who were in many ways on the margins of everyday social life in their respective villages. Dealt a dismal hand at birth, their personal antecedents were, however, not dramatically different from those of many other men in rural Peddie District. If there was a common element to their predicaments, it was that their natal homesteads were displaced from elsewhere with few resources, something which immediately put their weak social networks and brittle livelihoods under considerable strain (cf. Sharp and Spiegel 1985). The real tragedy was that theirs were by no means exceptional cases. In every village in Peddie there were several men in this age category who were from families that were not necessarily marginal in the sense of having been evicted from elsewhere. These were the men who had, at least since the early 1980s, been living out this dire combination of long-term unemployment, ever-weakening kin and social networks, alcoholism and a hand-to-mouth existence (see Beinart 1994 on the externalisation of poverty to the bantustans; Sagner 2000)..

Since they did not hold cattle, and were generally regarded as too unreliable to herd the animals of other homesteads, the interest of destitute men like MaJay and Manene in cattle generally only extended to the salvage or ritual slaughter of other people's animals, the latter because it was usually accompanied by the brewing of beer and consumption of brandy and meat.

These were the men that many women in the villages referred to as 'useless' and with whom women tried by whatever means to minimise their social interaction. Because of their poor social standing, *amadoda* [circumcised men] like Manene and MaJay undermined the dominant patriarchal order still prevalent in rural villages across Peddie District (Bank 2002a; Connell 1995; Minnaar 2003: 18-22). This was because the dominant masculinity rested on constructions of men as breadwinners and providers in their households and as the arbiters of moral authority in the home and the community. Men like MaJay and Manene were evidence of the failure of this dominant masculinity in the face of structural constraints which had seriously limited the possibility of many rural men to take up the role of *intsika yekhaya* [the pillar of the home]. Their predicament also put a serious strain on the practice of *masincedisane* [let us help each other], as they were unreliable in passing on whatever help they received from other households to their struggling dependents,

where they still had dependents. Moreover, they were unlikely to ever be in a situation where they could reciprocate the material assistance that had been provided to them.

Pointedly, both MaJay and Manene spoke of the need for men to own cattle, as if, in their personal cases, this would have lifted them out of their predicament and earned them the respect afforded to other men of their generation. Manene also referred to goats, echoing a common sentiment about the usefulness of goat production as a 'stepping stone' to cattle-ownership. Both men also made mention, however, of the risk involved in owning cattle and the fact that the cattle at their homes had long since died.

Finding their feet? Household heads aged 41 to 52 years

Because they did not qualify for old-age pensions and in the context of rural job scarcity, the married male household heads in this age cohort were mostly away from their rural homes, earning their livelihoods in the urban job market (see Ainslie *et al.* 1997). In many instances, the household heads who were away in the towns were semi-permanent residents in urban areas, at least until retirement age or until they lost their jobs.

Household heads in this age category who were employed were likely to have the highest incomes of all the cattle-owning households. This was because they were likely to have been employed for the first time during the post-1985 period that was characterised by political upheaval, greater labour activism (in urban South Africa), improvements in secondary education and on-the-job skills training. These all translated into higher wages for the semi-skilled and unskilled workers fortunate enough to be employed. They were also likely to have benefited from expanded work opportunities in the Ciskeian bantustan bureaucracy of the 1980s.

Despite this, they had relatively little disposable income to invest in cattle. This was usually because other pressing expenses, including feeding, clothing and educating their children, and possibly the cost of caring for young grandchildren, made serious demands on their income. The substantial building and furnishing costs involved in establishing their homesteads were also prominent items of expenditure during this

period. There was thus a formidable list of consumer goods with which cattle purchases and the costs of animal husbandry had to compete.

In addition, certain household expenses, particularly education expenses for their children, might be offset by the sale of cattle. This also resulted in lower stock numbers. Despite these obstacles in the way of their attempts to invest in cattle, there were some individuals in this age category who proved remarkably adept at meeting their myriad domestic obligations and still managing to build up their cattle herds. These people were among the most successful cattle farmers in rural Peddie District.

Khayaletu Mapayi, at 47 years of age, held 77 cattle, which constituted the biggest herd in Hamburg village and one of the biggest herds in the reserve areas of Peddie District. Although it is rather long, I present his interesting and colourful case-study of just how materially, if not always socially, successful his single-minded approach to accumulation through cattle-farming and agrarian production has been.

Too successful? Khayaletu Mapayi, the 47-year-old 'stay-at-home' cattle king of Hamburg⁶

My father was Sandi Mapayi. We are *Dlamini* [clan members]. My father was born near King William's Town in about 1922. He came to Hamburg with his parents in about 1940. In 1958, our family was removed [by the government] from the area now occupied by the Nature Conservation housing in Hamburg. My father married Nokundla Mabangeli from Hamburg, paying eight head of cattle to the Mabangeli family. Neither my mother nor father ever went to school. My father worked on the railways in Port Elizabeth. Before this, he had worked in Johannesburg. My father liked cattle but he [only] had between 10 and 20 [at various times]. His father [my grandfather] had many cattle. My father was not interested in ploughing. He died in 1998 at an age of close to 80 years. He had no cattle of his own when he died. (I learned later that Khayaletu's father had been forced to sell his cattle to pay off the debts that Khayaletu had incurred while in Port Elizabeth, which would not have endeared

⁶ See the description in Sansom (1981: 104-5) of the phenomenon of 'stay-at-homes' in Sekhukhuneland, which sounds remarkably similar to Khayaletu's case.

Khaya lethu to his brothers).

We were eight children, one has passed away. Two siblings live in Port Elizabeth, one works as a gardener in Grahamstown, the last-born is in Johannesburg and there are three of us in Hamburg. I was born in 1954. I am the fourth-born child and the second-last of my father's sons. I am *ujongekhaya* [the one who must stay and look after the home].

I passed Std.6 [8 years of schooling] here at Hamburg Primary in 1971. In 1973, I started working at Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery in Port Elizabeth when I was 19 years old. In the same year, I bought three heifers. Two were from my brother and one was from the Ndondlos. In 1976, I left that job and went to work at Shatterprufe Safety Glass in Port Elizabeth. In 1982, I left that job and came back to Hamburg to start herding my cattle. By then, the cattle here had increased to 18 and they were under my father, but owned by me and my brothers. In the drought [of 1982-84], fifteen of these cattle died. I had two cattle left and my brother had one. My younger brother was too small to herd the cattle.

I went to the bush [to be circumcised] in 1977 here in Hamburg and I married in 1980. I started ploughing with the remaining three oxen and three oxen from my father's brother in 1983. I had bought a car in Port Elizabeth, which I sold for scrap. I bought five she-goats and one ram with the money. In 1985, I exchanged the three oxen with an *umlungu* [white man] from Wilsonia in East London. I got 2 heifers and 2 *tollies* [bull-calves or weaners] and a cow with a calf. A heifer and bull-calf went to my brother and I took the other four animals (cow with calf, heifer and *tollie*). I used to plough for myself and for other people. They would ask me to train and *bopha* [yoke] their animals to prevent them from wandering into *Maqhubeni* [the formerly 'white' residential area of Hamburg] where stray cattle were impounded. In the first year, I harvested lots of sorghum and mealies. This is where I put my energy in those years. I didn't want to see anyone hungry at my home.

When I paid *lobolo* there were not many cattle to be had, so we paid with cash. I paid seven cattle, valued at R800 each. My first wife has since left me. She was from Bodiam [a neighbouring village]. Our children are

Vuyolomzi, my first-born son, who is 20 years old, and Siyabonga, my second son, who is with his mother in Bodiam. I got married again in 1985. We have two children, 10 and 9 years old respectively. The children assist me with the cattle and goats. I also have a girlfriend in Bell [village] and we have three sons, two of whom are here helping me, while the smallest one is with his mother's family. (Another informant subsequently told me that Khayaletu also has a girlfriend on the other side of Hamburg).

In the 1980s, I would plough an acre of land for only R6. People in Hamburg hired my services. I saved the money I earned until I had about R200. Then I decided to loan money out to the workers at the municipality [i.e. he ran a money-lending business]. I bought a black cow from the Mapunga family with income from this business in May... Two months later, the cow had a calf, meaning it was pregnant when I bought it. When the calf was bigger, I changed it for 2 *tollies* at Tuku village. That black cow is the one that increased my cattle, and its first heifer. They have calves every year, without fail.

I don't employ anyone to look after my stock, I look after them very well myself, especially the calves. Even [back] then, I would do it all myself. The cattle aren't kraaled everyday, because they graze on the vacant farm near the Mtana River. I would wake up early and fetch some to *bopha* them [to plough] and then take them back out to graze after ploughing.

Old man Matya used to have an ox-wagon. I used my oxen [and his wagon] to collect shingle [from the beach in Hamburg] and sell it and Matya and I would split the profits. I bought two *tollies* from Somandla and exchanged them with Mzimela at Tuku village for 4 *tollies* when they were older.

After a while, I decided to go it alone with the shingle and I would make R1,500 per fortnight. It was easy to buy cattle, because they were not so expensive, only about R500-600 [each]. I would buy people's young calves and young oxen for low prices and *bopha* [yoke] them for ploughing. My herd was increasing all the time. In 1995, I had 12 oxen, and I started to buy cows, not heifers. I sold six oxen to Dr. Macenge [a

Port Elizabeth-based medical doctor who owns the farm adjacent to Hamburg] and bought six young oxen from him for R600 each. I also bought my first bull from him for R500. Later I bought eight heifers from Macenge at R1,000 each, a total of R8,000.

Interviewer: Do you favour exchanges over sales of cattle?

Khayaletu: We want livestock not money. The money [from the sale of one animal] won't buy two head. Those who want money must go sell that one beast. [At] that time, I was not smoking or drinking, [so] the only money I spent was on food. If I have money, even now, all I want to do is to buy stock. When my wife asks for money, I have to go and sell an animal.

I exchanged [cattle] with the black farmers who replaced the white farmers [who left the area when Peddie District became part of the Ciskei]. They [black farmers] didn't want money, they wanted big oxen to sell at the stocksales. In the 1970s, people wanted to [ex]change their oxen, not sell them. The whole of Hamburg was ploughed then. In the 1980s, there was a *stokvel* [stocksale] of sorts at Gcinisa. They would exchange big oxen and give people two calves. It was part of the Ciskei government at that time.

Interviewer: If there's a drought, what will you do with all these cattle?

Khayaletu: The place where my cattle are is a good place. The grass won't be depleted easily. In [the drought of] 1991, I bought bags of germ-meal and licks for my cattle. I also inject my cattle with vitamin A to maintain their weight during drought. I buy medicine at Border Vet or at Umtiza in Peddie, for botulism, blackwater, footrot. I sometimes use Xhosa medicines, but only sometimes. When I want to buy medicine, I sell some *tollies*, maybe 3-6, or some big oxen.

I look after my calves well. I inject, inoculate and deworm them. I won't sell milk, as that would mean that the calves don't get enough milk. I don't mind that some money could come in that way. I just make sure that everyone in the family has enough *amasi* [sour milk].

People from Hamburg are jealous. They say I have stolen Macenge's cattle. The police took four cows and an ox from me. I sent the human rights lawyers my receipts, but the servant on Macenge's farm who sold the cattle to me had disappeared by that time. I left it, as my cattle will increase by themselves again. (I was reliably informed that Khayaletu did in fact end up in court and got a suspended sentence for stock-theft on this occasion). On another occasion, Khayaletu had, I was told, used *amayeza* [medicine] to cheat old man Jack Mapunga out of his ten cattle. Other informants questioned why, if they were all his cattle, the animals in Khayaletu's kraal had a number of different brand-markings. I put this question to him.

Khayaletu: I have my own brand now. During the time of [the apartheid] pass laws, I used my father's sister's husband's surname, i.e. Headman Bonisani Pisayo, and this is still the name in my I.D. book. I would like to change my HBP brand, and also change from using my father's brand of SM on my cattle.

Interviewer: Do you sell to the women buyers from Mdantsane, who sell meat in the meatmarket there?

Khayaletu: I sell *tollies* [male weaners], but the women buyers from Mdantsane want big cattle, not *tollies*, so I don't sell to them. I do sell at the *stokvel* [stocksale]. In December last year, I drove seven *tollies*, each 1 year 7 months old, to the *stokvel*. I got R1,600 each, which is a good way to get a decent price, i.e. to sell them as a batch, so that the price evens out. In January this year, I sold two old cows at Loverstwit [stocksale], and got R1,120 and R1,400 for them. I have 29 goats and I use them as a stepladder to buy cattle. I only sell the rams. I don't like to sell the ewes. [Actually] it's a long time since I sold a goat.

Interviewer: Do you keep other people's cattle here, maybe those of your brothers?

Khayaletu: No, all these cattle are mine, my brothers have their own places and their own cattle. (This does not square with what Khayaletu told us later during a detailed survey of his herd, which showed he held a number of cattle owned by other villagers, mostly widows).

Interviewer: Are you a member of a church here?

Khayaletu: I don't go to church. I perform *amasiko yesiXhosa* [Xhosa rituals] instead. This year I am sending two of my sons to the bush to become men.

Interviewer: Who are the people you socialise with in the village?

Khayaletu: My friend is Mr. Mzukisi Mthoba, whom I see on a daily/weekly basis. I only see other people when I plough, as my day consists of getting up and taking the cattle out to graze. On a monthly basis, I see my brother [who is] in Port Elizabeth who comes back here at month-end. My wife's mother and family might come during the course of a month. Once a year, I see Wandisile, who is my father's older brother's son, who comes from East London. My brothers, sisters and their partners come here during December, with their children.

Khayaletu's phenomenal success in accumulating his herd of nearly 80 animals was not without controversy. Many people in Hamburg were convinced that he was a cattle-rustler and that his brushes with the law were not without substance. Several senior men told me unequivocally that some of the cattle in Khayaletu's herd were stolen and that he was a stock-thief. I witnessed one instance of a visit by the police to Khayaletu's kraal after the neighbouring farmer, Macenge, had reported some of his cattle missing, but a search of Khayaletu's kraal failed to turn up any of these cattle. Indeed, Hamburg itself was known across the district as the 'stock-theft capital of Peddie', with villagers further west convinced that their cattle were driven along the beach to Hamburg and thence across the Keiskamma River to be sold for good profits to the back-yard and taxi-rank meat-sellers of East London and Mdantsane. However, I found precious little evidence of this during the period that I conducted fieldwork in Hamburg. My stay in the village did, however, coincide with a period of highly lucrative, mostly illegal, abalone extraction from the sea by residents of Hamburg, which may have resulted in a temporary lull in local cattle-rustling activities that outsiders were so adamant characterised the area.

No matter what his detractors might wish to ascribe his success to, Khayaletu stood out as the most successful Hamburg cattle-farmer. Having said that, my research shows that virtually every village in the former reserves of the Eastern Cape had one

or more 'Khayaletu' of its own. These were men who owned considerable herds of cattle and substantial flocks of goats and sheep, often dwarfing the other herds and flocks in the village in terms of numbers. They played a 'big man' role that, although it was contested in the affairs of the village, saw them acting in many ways, and mostly on their own terms, as a sturdy patriarchal bulwark to various pressures for social and agrarian change. The steady march of their material success deepened socio-economic cleavages and their status appeared to fuel resentments that need to be carefully managed within the context of rural social and political change.

Khayaletu himself put his runaway success down to the careful husbandry of his calves and his astute exchanging and selling of unproductive animals. He also had no direct labour costs, as he and his sons did all the herding and animal husbandry themselves. Since the unemployment rate for unskilled workers was high, the opportunity cost he incurred by foregoing a wage was low.

Khayaletu used his own oxen to plough both his own field and, for payment, the fields of other people. He ploughed with the help of his friend Mthoba. This provided him with some cash income and ensured that his cattle helped – and, significantly, were seen to be helping – other people in the village. He agreed that his success had bred jealousy in the village, and it was not difficult to see why. When his herd of 77 animals was driven through the village to the dip-tank, it kicked up a good deal of dust in the faces of many stockless and struggling families. Also, while he was clearly excited to tell me that he had bought a two-year-old, registered Brahman-type bull for R4,000 from a white farmer at Kidd's Beach [near East London], this sort of expenditure might well have been irksome to other villagers.

In addition, it seemed that some people remembered with a biblical resentment his days as *umatshonisi* [moneylender] and felt that his herd had been built 'on their backs' through the high interest that they paid to borrow money from him during the very tough economic times experienced especially during the early 1980s. Others apparently resented the fact that adverse circumstances forced them to exchange young heifers with Khayaletu, especially when these same heifers went on to bear many calves in his kraal. In fact, this was the one reason given to me by a number of men for why they disliked selling cattle in the village. It would, of course, only have

applied to heifers and fertile cows, which people were reluctant to sell to under any circumstances anyway.

A fascinating perspective on this case-study was the observation by Khayaletu that his family would, in an earlier time, have been regarded as 'Red', by virtue of the values he espoused, some of which find expression in their lifestyle choices. Practices such as keeping cattle, living a simple, agrarian-oriented if not agrarian-based lifestyle, ploughing one's field every year, a certain style of dress and demeanour and, as far as possible, shunning ostentatious consumerism were taken as contemporary evidence of these choices.

What was fascinating and ironic about this particular case was that Khayaletu has managed to claw his way back from a more 'proletarian' status to a peasant state of 'Redness' by feeding off the consumerism around him. He achieved this state firstly by collecting shingle for sale to people wanting to build modern rectangular houses with bricks, mortar and iron, rather than with the more 'traditional' round huts, that were constructed with mud and thatching-grass. Secondly, his achievement of 'Redness' came through his diversification into the money-lending business, which allowed him to charge employed people interest on loans and to accumulate cash to invest in cattle. Thirdly, his remarkably successful consolidation of his cattle operation rested on his astute business sense in actively trading in cattle (including with white speculators), something that was regarded as anathema to rural Xhosa and particularly 'Red' values. Note, however, that his trading generally took the more socially acceptable form of exchanges of cattle rather than cash sales and often stressed the idiom of *masincedisane* [let us help each other].

In other ways, Khayaletu rated highly in local people's estimations. He set fair prices for the cattle and goats that he sold to fellow villagers and thus tended to dominate, or at least play a role in, many local sales (and exchanges). He was also known for his generosity with his plentiful supply of *amasi* [sour milk], allowing his sons' many young friends, several of them from impoverished homes, to consume unlimited amounts of *amasi* at his homestead on virtually a daily basis.

More typical of this age category than Khayaletu, at least in terms of the number of

cattle he owned and his general livelihood prospects, was Dickson Masi, also of Hamburg and from a similar agrarian-oriented background.

Crazy about cattle: Dickson Masi (44 years old)

My name is Mhleshe Dickson Masi (*Nonzaba* clan). I was born in 1957 in Hamburg. I grew up in Hamburg. My family had cattle when I was growing up and they still have cattle now. I was given one heifer from my home, because I used to look after the cattle there from when I was very little and people could see [that] I did this well. From there, I bought more cattle when I worked [on a contract] for Telkom. I had even bought cattle before this, when we were *jobbing* [i.e. temporarily employed] here, planting trees in the forest. In each and every job, I want to buy cattle.

While working at the forest, I earned R170/month. Cattle cost R300 for *ithokazi* [a heifer] at the time, which was in 1986. I bought one heifer at this time from my grandmother. The money that was left over, I saved and used to buy food. Later, I got a job with Telkom, and was earning R1 600/month. I managed to buy three *mathokazi* with my earnings from here. These animals cost R1,500 each, and I got them from Mr. Msutu at Wesley. I later bought three heifers from a white farmer at Kidd's Beach for R1,300, R1,500 and R1,500 respectively.

I don't live with my parents, I [am married and] live apart from them ...*ndizimele* [I do things for myself]. I like to buy cattle, because my parents taught me that cattle are the bank of Xhosa people. I don't have a bank account.⁷

Andrew Ainslie (AA): What differences are there between money and cattle?

DM: With money in a bank, you can't milk it or plough with it: it just stays in the bank. With cattle, there are plenty of uses, or work [that] you can get from cattle. You can milk them, plough with them, and you can sell them to get money when you need it. It's better to keep cattle, they eat

⁷ After this interview, my research assistant elaborated on this: 'Dickson really is *iqaba* [a 'Red' or uneducated person]', he said, 'because when we worked together on the Telkom project, every month he would get paid and he would go to the forest, dig a hole and bury his money...also, Dickson has a glass eye, after losing an eye in a stick-fight as a boy...stick-fighting is a 'Red' thing to do.'

grass. Also, it is difficult to find a buyer for an animal in a hurry, so your savings (in cattle) are safe.

AA: Are these cattle yours or are they the cattle of your family?

DM: My cattle are only mine. They are all here with me...

AA: Do you have to consult anyone when you want to sell or exchange cattle?

DM: No, when I want to sell a cow, I can sell it, without contacting my *malume* [mother's brother] here in Hamburg or other relative.⁸

AA: What about the animals you were trying to exchange for heifers with Roland Webster [a local cattle speculator] here during the weekend?

DM: Nobody was interested in why I was going to exchange these cattle of mine, but I did go to my *malume* and explain why I am exchanging them.

AA: Were you just being polite, or was it a case of having to explain your actions?

DM: I didn't have to ask or explain, it was just a discussion between us. There is no chance of his saying "no, don't sell or exchange it." My wife has a right to say this, and I did discuss this with her.

AA: Under what circumstances will you sell an animal for cash?

DM: I can sell an animal *only* [very emphatic] in order to get cash [as opposed to keeping it or exchanging it for another animal], when there is nothing to eat in this home of mine or if someone⁹ here is ill and we need money to pay for medicines and/or treatment. I can't buy a fridge or a television by selling an animal. No, I have to work to get these things. [His unemployed wife, who has entered their modest home, confirms that he will only sell to buy another heifer, not for buying any domestic items]. If I have 15 or 16 cattle, then I can begin to sell animals [he currently has 12 cattle].

AA: Is having cattle the same as having a job?

DM: It's better to keep cattle, because jobs are scarce. Also to keep cattle is to keep money...[but] only when I am a pensioner, will I not look for work again. Now, even if I have plenty of cattle, I will continue to look for a job. I won't do farming full-time.

AA: What about milk, manure, other things from your cattle?

⁸ I learned later from a relative of his that Dickson's mother was a Masi and that she was unmarried when she gave birth to Dickson. As a result, he took on the Masi family name of his maternal kin.

⁹ Dickson has three children who are nine, seven and three years old respectively.

DM: I don't milk now, as my cows are short of teats [they have tick-damaged udders]. I use the cattle to plough at my home, bringing them together with some of the cattle there. I don't have a field here at this place of mine. We use *ubulongwe* [fresh cattle dung] to *ukusinda* [smear on the floors of our house]. I don't have a kraal here, I haven't built one yet, so I cannot collect *umgquba* [manure for fertilising cultivated lands and gardens]. I don't have a field to plough. I am interested in ploughing and Mr. Joe has offered me his field for next growing season for the first time. I paid Possible Peteni to *brakkish* [prepare] it, which they did this past week. He was helped by Mazizi Mkhaya. I must just give Mr. Joe 'something' when I harvest there, even if only a mug [of seed], as this is not a *sahlulo* [share-cropping] arrangement.

My wife is from Loverstwit. She definitely does want to discuss with me what things we should buy in the home. I [also] want to build a house, but I can't sell cattle to do it. [Later, as we prepare to leave], DM says: I need to build a proper home...I am perched on a hillside here and everyone can see me and my little shack, but I won't sell cattle to do it. I would rather move down the hill – towards Mtana River – to avoid being seen by everyone as someone who lives in a shack. I can only build a house if I can get a job.

Unlike Khayaletu, who apparently made a decision to pursue rurally based agrarian production and cattle-centred entrepreneurship, others in this age category like Dickson Masi were cattle-owning men who found themselves more or less involuntarily in the rural areas, as a result of the changes in the nature of the work available to them. The impact, especially on the job security of unskilled workers like Dickson, was negative.

Interviews with cattle-owning men in this position revealed that they were reluctantly 'eating' into their bovine capital for ordinary household expenses, especially food, and were often without much hope of ever finding full-time or long-term employment in future, not least because (as noted above) the costs associated with these searches, which often turned out to be futile, were themselves prohibitively high. Added to this was the fact that the last few years had been

favourable in terms of increases in herd sizes in rural villages, and many of these men were reluctant to leave their cattle while they went to the city in search of employment, the sheer lack of which was confirmed by the stream of unemployed men moving in the opposite direction.

Starting out? Household heads aged 40 years and less

The Peddie-wide survey shows that the households in this age cohort had the second-highest average number of cattle per household (9,2 head) of all the age categories. Data from the subsequent surveys conducted in the villages of Hamburg and Loverstwist, while representing modest fractions¹⁰ of the total cattle-owning households, supported this initial finding. These data show that cattle-holding households headed by men in this age category (six households in Hamburg and three in Loverstwist), who we might expect to still be in a phase of consolidating their income streams and of establishing both their homesteads and their cattle herds, actually held among the highest average number of cattle per household in their villages. Why should this be the case?

To weigh up the usefulness of cattle as investments for younger men, we need to distinguish between several different categories of households headed by men aged 40 years and less. Firstly, those who were married and usually (as marriage invariably follows from it) in steady, 'formal' employment, although their wives might be unemployed or underemployed. Secondly, married men who were formally employed and whose wives were similarly employed in the formal sector. Examples of households in this category were not common in rural Peddie, simply because these households tended to be urban-based. Thirdly, young men who did not have reliable 'formal-sector' jobs and thus were not married, although they might well have children by various girlfriends. Many of these young men still lived at their parental homestead, but in their own 'flat' or room adjacent to the main dwelling.

Two case studies will help to shed light on some of the challenges faced by household heads in this age category.

¹⁰ Six per cent and eight per cent respectively.

Vuyani and Zamikhaya Sangwane

Vuyani is thirty-one years old. He is employed as a 'public order' policeman (or 'POP') in Grahamstown (some 130 kilometres from his home in Hamburg). His wife also lives in Grahamstown. He has 13 cattle at the family homestead in Hamburg. Five of these cattle were his deceased father's and eight are his own. He now wants to buy his own bull to breed with his cows. He says that in time he will divide his father's cattle with his younger siblings, his brother Zamikhaya and his sister, Ntombi. The siblings do not live with their mother, who lives elsewhere in the village. Vuyani and his wife do not have any children yet. He complained to me about the pressure that he is under because of his role as provider for his wife and his siblings. He is keen to see his wife attend the technical college in Grahamstown to upgrade her office management qualification and thus her employability. He is concerned about the training that Ntombi and Zamikhaya need in order to improve their qualifications that will improve their chances of finding employment. Both of them are unemployed and thus rely on him for material support. Vuyani tells me that Ntombi, who is 23 years old, has expressed interest in getting her 'Code 14' [driver's licence for a heavy duty vehicle]. He is prepared to assist her financially, as long as she undertakes to use the license to find work. With respect to his job, Vuyani is considering applying for a transfer closer to Hamburg, particularly given the growing number of cattle at home. But a move like this has several implications, such as forfeiting his extra ('danger pay') allowances and stand-by allowances, as ordinary duties in the South African Police Service are not considered to be as dangerous as service in the 'POP' unit.

Zamikhaya is 28 years old and is as solidly built as his older brother. He passed std.10 in 1998 at St.Charles Sojola, the local high school in Hamburg. He then went to Port Elizabeth to do a computer course for six months. When he failed to find work in Port Elizabeth, he returned to Hamburg. That was in December 1999. Since then, he has been in Hamburg and has become an active participant in local abalone harvesting activities. When his brother Vuyani bought cattle, Zamikhaya decided to

give him R1,000 as a contribution¹¹ towards this purchase, because he didn't want his brother to do 'everything alone while we are staying together'. Zamikhaya told me that 'these cattle are not for him [Vuyani] or for me, they are just cattle of the home... We will only divide the calves, like, the first calf will be his and the second one will be for me. But we haven't yet talked about this, I am just guessing [that this is how we will do it.]...I don't think that I will buy cattle [for myself] because I think that those ones bought for the family are enough. I might buy some if I move from my home and build my own house. It is my aim to build my own house, to get married and to have children but not more than two...'

Because Vuyani is away working and living in Grahamstown with his wife, Zamikhaya is supposed to buy food for himself and his sister, Ntombi. To do so, he relies on small amounts of money from his brother. More recently however, he has joined the local gold rush, i.e. the abalone harvesting activities that have mushroomed in coastal villages like Hamburg, and he is able to use the income from this source to buy sustenance for the home. In fact, Zamikhaya suggests to me that he is able to make at least R1,500 every two weeks. He has used some of his money from abalone to buy himself new clothes and a cell-phone. He also bought a bedroom suite for himself and some things for his girlfriend, although he pointed out that he does not spend money on his girlfriend 'every month'.

This case was interesting, mostly because it was a relatively rare example of young brothers working together for their mutual benefit (see Niehaus 1994 on siblings living together and supporting each other in *Qwaqwa*). Certainly, the two brothers seemed very close and enjoyed each other's company, which was not always something that was much in evidence in the rural village context, where men seemed to compete with each other. Note that even in the absence of parents who had a material interest in spurring them on, their professed project was that of *ukwakh'umzi*. For his part, by buying additional cattle and placing them at the rural home, Vuyani had taken on the role of *intsika yekhaya* [the pillar of the home],

¹¹ This R1,000 is essentially a gesture of support on the part of Zamikhaya for his brother's project of building the homestead.

something that earned him considerable prestige in the village. His bovine investments provided a social cover for his siblings, because the presence of cattle gave Zamikhaya a legitimate reason to stay on in the village. In his brother's absence, Zamikhaya was responsible, as *ujongekhaya* [one who looks after the home], for the well-being of these cattle and the homestead. That said, this co-operation between the siblings was likely to change in future, as the pressure that his marriage would place on Vuyani's commitment to his siblings was likely to mount. Just as Ntombi was expected to marry and/or have children and move away (although this may not happen in practice), Zamikhaya would also be expected to make his own way in the foreseeable future. This would be all the more so if his investments began to take a noticeably self-interested turn, i.e. were not visibly directed towards *building the home*, for instance, if he were to start purchasing building blocks with a view to building a house of his own. On the other hand, he would not be keen to take this step without the security of a reliable job and regular income.

I located some information about this family in the records kept by the social welfare worker who had been active in Hamburg during the particularly bleak period of 1986-87. These records show that in 1986 Vuyani's parents had already been divorced for some years and that their father's whereabouts were unknown. The children and their mother were staying with her parents where she experienced 'family troubles' and expressed the wish to have her own home. The government social worker noted that the family's only source of income was the R60 per month that Vuyani's mother earned on the 'CEAP', which was the Ciskeian government's poverty alleviation programme. This was at a time when the 'Household Subsistence Level for a black family of six in Peddie town' had been computed as R379,90 per month (see De Wet 1997: 8).

With parents who had no more than a Std.3 education (five years of schooling) and evidence of an emotionally difficult, and economically desperate, childhood, I began asking myself just how Vuyani had achieved his remarkable transition into the respectability of rural cattle-owning manhood?

The answer, or at least part of it, emerged during a subsequent conversation with Vuyani. Vuyani was one of a number of young men from Hamburg families who benefited from the recruitment drive of a certain Brigadier Zatho of the Ciskeian bantustan police. This Zatho had his home in Hamburg and, in the late 1980s, he encouraged young men from the villages of Peddie South to apply to join the Ciskeian police force.¹² This route was not without its risks, as personnel serving in the bantustan security forces faced ridicule by the many ANC sympathisers in the Eastern Cape. In the post-1994 period, however, virtually all these police and security force personnel were integrated into the 'new' South African establishment without any major fuss.¹³

When I encountered them in the village, most of the young men who benefited from this recruitment were married and were amongst the most economically established household heads of their generation in Hamburg. Many of them were already cattle-owners of note, like Vuyani. By comparison, other young men of their age continued to be unemployed and thus to lack the material resources necessary to seriously contemplate marriage and establishing their own homesteads.

This fortuitous break into secure employment, precipitated by a conscious decision made by each young man at the time, had set a significant number of young men in Hamburg and surrounding villages, in this critical age cohort 30-40 years, on what was an increasingly unattainable path of reliable employment, to domestic and social respectability as measured by contemporary rural Xhosa values. In the absence of a latter-day Brigadier Zatho, others like Possible Peteni (below) were finding this path virtually impossible to follow.

Thumani Possible Peteni (40 years old)

I was born in 1961 and I grew up in Hamburg. I am the second-oldest of five brothers. My father owned cattle and we still have cattle at my home, even though both my parents have passed away. I live at my [family] home with my younger brother, Malusi. There are ten cattle here and they

¹² Brigadier Zatho later died in a motorcar accident near Loversttwist.

¹³ Peires (1992) does, however, mention how one hundred and sixty Ciskei policemen, including generals and brigadiers, were dismissed in 1991.

should be divided equally between us five brothers, though when [this will happen] I don't know.

I had a job on the abalone [harvesting] project in Hamburg. This was before we applied for licenses. I would earn at least R1,200 per fortnight by [illegally] collecting and selling abalone. With this money, I bought two heifers from Mr. Mfundi at Wesley, for which I paid R1,200 each. With the money I had left over, I bought groceries and paid my debts.

My reason for buying cattle is that my parents made a stipulation about the family cattle in their will. This is that my older brother will decide how to divide all these cattle and so I decided to buy my own. I don't have a bank account to keep my money. [Anyway] money is like cooked food, because it is easy to use money for useless things and then it is gone. Cattle and money are different, because if you want to do *umsebenzi* [conduct a ritual], you must go and buy an animal. But if you already have cattle, you may have the right cattle in your herd, and then do *umsebenzi*. Also, you can't sell cattle for any reason. I can sell my cattle but I will contact my [older] brother first. To show respect to my brothers, I will consult them before selling. They might try to help me [with money] instead of selling an animal. I will only sell when we have a serious problem in my family. I will never have enough cattle [in the same way as] you will never have enough money.

Note that Possible was not married nor was he the household head of the Peteni homestead, as his older brother, who was employed in Port Elizabeth, had taken over this role since their parents passed away. This was a significant factor in Possible's case (see below). Possible was a well-liked and capable man in the village who tended to be a frequent visitor at the *shebeens* around the village. His somewhat unlikely move into cattle-ownership actually made good sense, seeing that he was structurally unemployed and without any formal qualifications that would allow him to find well-paid work in future. It was also an indication that he was opting to take the same route as Dickson Masi (described above), that is, to diversify his investments in the rural economy, while his hope of finding secure, urban-based employment in future faded with each day spent in the village and its *shebeens*.

By investing some of his windfall income from abalone harvesting in socially useful resources like cattle, he achieved several things at once. He laundered significant amounts, in local terms at least, of dubiously gained money into the village economy (cf. Shipton 1989: 34). Because of the relatively poor record-keeping of cattle numbers and patterns of ownership in the reserve areas, this was a good strategy and he was certainly not alone in pursuing it. He also gained valuable social standing in the village for having decided to invest his somewhat dubious financial gains in cattle which contributed to building his family homestead and indirectly, to the village moral economy. (As noted above, even though it was illegal, people did not regard abalone harvesting as bad in a moral sense, and so the money made from this activity was not 'bitter' [à la Shipton 1989] and was not seen as contaminating any goods subsequently bought with it).

Also, by converting some of his 'slippery' cash into 'hard' cattle, Possible sought to protect these resources from the relatively expensive hard-drinking lifestyle that he and his friends liked to maintain and which could all too quickly dissipate his money reserves if they were kept in cash form or banked. This conversion was also helpful both in pre-empting any criticism from his brothers concerning his current carefree lifestyle and its associated patterns of consumption, and in maintaining their interest in and support for his longer-term well-being. This was because buying cattle implicated Possible's brothers in his overall economic well-being, as he points out. Should he want to sell an animal to get cash, his brothers could be expected to try to persuade him against this, and perhaps even offer to lend him money to ward off an 'emergency' sale. Although this level of sibling involvement in his affairs might be overly intrusive at times, it does improve his chances of achieving greater resilience in his livelihood.¹⁴ In this way, his brothers would act as a real and a rhetorical bulwark that helped to protect that portion of his wealth which was tied up in cattle from predation by friends in need of cash or the demands of his girlfriends and creditors on his resources (cf. Sansom 1981: 104).

Also, it was Malusi, Possible's 25-year old younger brother, and not Possible

¹⁴ In another interview, 78-year old Mr. Hokwana told me that '...[if] you tie up your money [in cattle]...you will be afraid to go to the kraal to take a beast to sell... because you will wonder what your brothers will say about this. This is because *inkomo asiyonto yokudlala* [cattle are not for playing with].'

himself, who was responsible for herding and dipping the cattle at the family home. Possible was able to take advantage of this arrangement by adding his two animals to the ten cattle already in the homestead byre, i.e. he was under no obligation to reimburse Malusi for any extra work that herding these cattle might have entailed, although he would probably do so in some token fashion.

Lastly, precisely because his parents were both deceased, Possible was more confident about placing his own cattle in the family byre. This was very different from placing one's cattle in the family byre while one's father and/or mother was still alive. Numerous examples around the village had taught men like Possible that, upon the death of one's parents, securing a fair share of one's own contribution to the family herd over time could be problematic when the inheritance was divided. This was particularly the case for someone like Possible who was not the first-born son.

This issue had clearly also exercised the mind of Possible's younger brother, 37-year old Mzwabantu Peteni, who previously had secure employment at a leather-processing factory in Port Elizabeth. A married man, Mzwabantu moved back to Hamburg with his wife and 12-year-old son (his older daughter stayed on at school in Port Elizabeth) when he was retrenched in 1999. Once in Hamburg, local cultural norms dictated that, as a married man, Mzwabantu could not live indefinitely at his parental home, so he used his retrenchment 'package' to build his own house. He also used some of it to buy two heifers from a farmer at Wesley. He and his wife were unemployed when I encountered them, but made ends meet by engaging in abalone-harvesting. Asked about why he had opted to buy cattle, Mzwabantu first presented us with the 'stock' answer, *'if there is a umzi (home), there must be a kraal.'* However, further probing by my astute research assistant, Patrick Gusha, who was on good terms with the (slightly older) Peteni brothers, led him to volunteer that

My father's cattle are [now] owned by my elder brother. I don't want to force him to give me cattle. So I thought it better to buy my own cattle and zip my mouth... These cattle are owned by me and my wife and yes, I can sell an animal because they belong to me, but I will speak to my wife first.

Did investments in cattle offer a long-term alternative to paid employment? No, in virtually every case I came across, they did not. The success stories of men like

Khayaletu Mapayi were exceptional. But for men in the unenviable position of Dickson Masi, Possible and Mzwabantu, investments in cattle gave them the economic breathing space to seek out other livelihoods that might include local contract work ('jobbing') or longer-term urban-based employment. As I have argued above, investing in cattle helped them to tap into the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 1995: 79) that the rural politics of value in Peddie District, in which cattle were so centrally implicated as culturally proscribed commodities, continued to provide.

Younger men who lived 'at home'

Besides pressures to contribute financially to their parental homesteads, many young men also had material responsibilities towards the children they had fathered with girlfriends. As long as a young man was unemployed, even the courts, to which young women increasingly resorted to enforce the payment of child maintenance, were powerless to act against him. As soon as a man found work and began to earn a wage, these demands on his earnings could become formidable. Having built up considerable debts with siblings and friends, not to mention outstanding 'credits' at *shebeens* and *izirhoxo* [small shops selling household goods], these temporarily employed men were also likely to be accosted by the mothers of their children, eager to press their entitlements to some of the newly earned wages.

Diverting some of their earnings into the purchase of cattle, that were then placed in the relative security of the family byre, could be an effective way of avoiding some of these onerous demands, while at the same time winning kudos from their parents, siblings, extended families and other people in the village for their contribution to *building the home*. Another strategy was to contribute money to be spent on conducting rituals in the home or on domestic goods (see the case-study below). Although it was difficult to verify this by directly questioning the people involved, it seemed very likely that there was an element of collusion on the part of the parents of young men in this situation. Rather than seeing their son's earnings spent on girlfriends, who were variously described as rapacious and demanding, and on the children that these girlfriends claimed were his offspring, they would energetically support his plans to buy cattle for the family byre. This ensured that a proportion of his income was captured for the support of his parental home. Nevertheless, intra-household contestation was likely to arise over how much of this incoming money

was spent on purchases and maintenance of cattle, particularly as the control of these animals would rest with the young man's father.

This situation held true for Nkosinkhulu Ngcanga, one of several examples of this phenomenon who, at 28 years old, had four children by different girlfriends around the village. The eldest son of his parents, Nkosinkhulu had invested some of his earnings from contract work in cattle that were then placed in his father's byre. As pointed out above, this could be an attractive strategy specifically for the eldest son, who stood to inherit these cattle ultimately anyway. It was far less so for his younger brothers and of course, virtually unthinkable for his sister, who might live to see their contributions to the family herd set upon by their eldest brother who claimed the entire inheritance, based on the practice of primogeniture. On this score, note that while Zamikhaya Sangwane in the case-study above was confident that his older brother would act fairly in the way they share out the increases in their herd, they had yet to cross that particular bridge.

Many young people told me that they were 'fed up' with the idea of investing in cattle, which they compared with the now unfashionable handing over of one's wages to one's father (or parents) at month-end. Their stated preference was rather to invest any income they have more strategically in siblings or parents, including through selective contributions to projects of conspicuous consumption in their parental homes. Consider the case of Patrick in this regard.

Patrick's choices, Patrick's dilemmas

Twenty-eight-year-old Patrick arrived back at his home in the village from East London a week before starting a local contract job with Telkom. That was in June 1997. The job lasted until July 1999. Patrick's father, two sisters, Patrick's child from a prior relationship and the premarital child of his elder sister, Nomhle, all live at the family's homestead in the village. His 31-year-old (i.e. elder) sister, Nomhle, works at the Municipal offices in the village. Patrick's mother stays in East London where she is employed as a domestic worker and his brother is at East London College doing a course on Marketing and Management.

While employed by Telkom, Patrick was paid 'at least' R1 500 per month. I asked him to recall what exactly he had spent these wages on over the course of the two years that he was employed. He recalled that he had contributed R300 towards groceries for the home each month, although he didn't actually do any of the shopping himself. Instead he gave the money to Nomhle who, he said, demanded it of him. He opened an account at Sales House and bought clothes for himself, at a cost of around R250 per month. Opening the clothing account was not his idea, he claimed, but Nomhle's, because she wanted to buy clothes for herself and other members of the household using his account. He also contributed towards the costs of his brother's schooling, depositing R250 per month into his bank account. He spend some money on himself, paying visits to East London or Port Elizabeth, or wherever else he wanted to go and on 'entertainment' at the shebeens in the village and neighbouring area. He spent some of his money buying some things for his girlfriend.

He claims that it did not even cross his mind to buy cattle, because his father already has cattle, and he saw no need to spend his money to increase their number. But he did help his parents to conduct various *imisebenzi* [rituals]. On one occasion, he bought a goat in Tyolumnqa [a village en route to East London], which cost R400. He spent a further R200 to buy *imithombo* [the ingredients to make traditional sorghum beer] and he gave his mother R350 to buy groceries. He also bought six bottles of brandy for the ritual. With the buying done, he told his parents to go ahead and conduct the *umsebenzi* that they were anxious to conduct.

Lastly, Patrick recalled that he and Nomhle decided to buy a lounge suite and colour T.V. for their parents' home. He gave Nomhle R2 000 and she contributed some of her own money to buy these things. He claimed not to know how much she actually paid for them but trusts that she spent the money wisely as she is 'very good with money'.¹⁵

When pushed, Patrick's family placed themselves among the 'educated' section of the village in which I conducted my fieldwork research. The homestead had ten cattle in its *kraal*, but upon closer enquiry I found that two of these were owned by the sons of

¹⁵ Jones (1996: 166) notes that men's expenditure on liquor cannot be underestimated. Also, men are much more likely to enter into hire-purchase agreements...[for] items that can be ill-afforded.

Patrick's father's deceased elder brother. Patrick's father had been unemployed for several years. He kept busy ('jobbing') with painting contracts and other small jobs around the village. It was interesting that Patrick casually admitted that he did not contemplate spending any of his wages on cattle husbandry, such as purchasing livestock medicines, etc. for the the cattle of the homestead. Overall, however, his outlay indicated a strong commitment to the *ukwakh'umzi* [building the homestead] project, but without the expected investment in cattle. Why should this be so?

Part of the explanation lies in the fact that, although Patrick's father was still relatively young, he found himself among the structurally unemployed. He had previously spent a long period living away from his family in Port Elizabeth as *itshipha* [an absconder]. Although re-united with his wife and family, he did not appear to be privy to the livelihood decisions that Patrick's sister and his mother make in relation to the needs of the household. Patrick has reasoned that, although he was the eldest son and thus he nominally stood to inherit his father's cattle, the herd may be dissipated before then.

His elder sister, Nomhle, was an assertive young woman who had, for the past few years, used the salary she earned as an administrative assistant in the municipal offices in the village to support the village-based family members. This meant that she had considerable influence, especially when working in liaison with her mother, who was the other reliable breadwinner in the family, over how Patrick spent his money.¹⁶ Like other young women in the village, Nomhle was adamant that cattle were a poor investment choice.

For his part, Patrick knew that the Telkom job would be of limited duration and since he was very likely to be reliant on their more dependable incomes again in future – as indeed he was at the time I interviewed him – he could ill-afford to alienate his mother and sister by making what they would perceive to be short-sighted and selfish investments in cattle. To do so would be to both convert his wages into the culturally proscribed domain of property which was firmly (and perilously) within his father's ambit of control (and that of other, more senior male relatives) *and* to send the wrong

¹⁶ There was a good chance that Patrick was considered for this contract job because his sister worked for the municipality and was able to lobby for his inclusion when the Telkom jobs were mooted. This would have made him doubly beholden to her.

message to his mother and sister about his commitment to them. Indeed, Patrick told me that, since he helped his mother out financially while she was unemployed, he can ‘now ask her for anything and she will try to help him’. This was less likely to be so automatic if he had chosen to spend his income during the time he was employed on buying five heifers.

But lest we infer from this case that cattle-ownership may be viewed favourably by a tiny minority of men, but was destined to fade away over time, consider the case of Zimasile Mabasela. This case recalls that of Vuyani Sangwane, and suggests that some men of the younger generation still valued cattle-ownership.

Zimasile Mabasela: Leaning on old familiar ways or learning new ones?

I was born in Hamburg and I grew up here. My father didn’t have cattle while he was alive [in the time that] we have lived here. When he died, he was a *tshipa* [absconder who had deserted his wife and family] in *eRhawutini* [Johannesburg], and he was without cattle.

When I worked at Telkom on a contract, [for the period July 1997 to June 1998], our pay was not less than R1,500 a month. I bought one animal from Khayaletu [Mapayi] in December 1997. It was a heifer and I paid R1,500 for it. I didn’t save any money, I built my home and bought my things, including living expenses, like food. I live with my mother, brother and sister here. Noyise, my other sister, lives at Phola Park [a new section of Hamburg village]. I help to buy groceries and whatever else might be needed here.

AA: Why did you decide to buy cattle?

ZM: Cattle are our bank. We save our money like this. Also, I like to keep cattle. I don’t have a bank account, [although] I plan to have one, but there are lots of money problems [here at home].

AA: What would you say are some of the differences between cattle and money?

ZM: Cattle increase and the price of them [also] increase[s] and so they are a good method of saving. Money [by contrast] is ready-made food – it’s easy for money to leave your pocket, to be eaten... This is bad. If you bought an animal at R1,500 in 1997, these days it will fetch R2,000 or more. If you bought a cow, after a year, you have got two animals.

AA: It seems to me that you are taking the route of the big men in the village, by investing in cattle, unlike some other young men who don't even consider buying cattle?

ZM: Yes, this is the route of big men, to buy cattle. I grew up here, so I saw from my neighbours that cattle are a good thing. I also asked older men, like John Tshobonga, about this and I heard that cattle are a good thing to have, especially when you are unemployed.

AA: Are these cattle yours or do they become the property of the *umzi* [home] was placed inside the *kraal*?

ZM: These cattle are mine. I am the owner, they were bought with my energy. But it is not part of a Xhosa future, to sell something without consulting your parents. Before I sell, I will speak to my mother.

AA: What will force/encourage you to sell?

ZM: I will sell if I have no money; if someone dies, to bury them, and so on. [I would do this] rather than have a member of my family burn [i.e. cremated] there [at the morgue, away from the village].

AA: How many animals would you regard as enough?

ZM: As I said, cattle are money, so there will never be enough. Even a millionaire wants to have more money.

AA: What about droughts? How will you act at such times?

ZM: Water is the most important thing in a drought. The last big drought we had was in 1983. What about diseases in our cattle? Can you advise us about these things [as] we don't know about diseases?

AA: Not really, I don't know much about them myself, but there is a book written in *isiXhosa* that deals with livestock diseases that the *abalimi* [extension officers] have. I will get it for you.

The case of Zimasile shows a young man who was motivated essentially by the *ukwakh'umzi* ideology to buy cattle to be placed in the homestead byre.

An important part of Zimasile's motivation was again the fact that he was the eldest son of the household and stood to recoup most of these cattle through inheritance anyway. Zimasile's observation and experience of the limited future employment prospects that were available to young men in his position provided an additional motivation to invest in cattle that reproduced, unlike money, and that over time allowed one to be recognised as a Xhosa man of status in the village.

During the course of my fieldwork period in Hamburg, Zimasile married a local girl whom he had impregnated. He paid *lobolo* [bridewealth] for her in cash. This was only one of three instances of bridewealth payment that I recorded in the two villages during my period of fieldwork. Certainly, it was increasingly difficult and thus rare for young men to pay *lobolo*. In fact, regaining access to animals that one had bought perhaps with the vague notion of using them to pay one's *lobolo* at some future point, but that were placed in the parental homestead byre, can be problematic. Virtually every senior men I questioned on this subject was adamant that his sons had to 'find their own *lobolo*' and should not look to their father's byre for assistance in this regard, unless they were committed to replacing the cattle promptly. This suggests just how strained the relations, and how low the levels of trust between the economically vulnerable older generation of men and younger men, had become. Again, this was by no means a recent phenomenon, though, and was indicative of the extent to which senior men have lost control of the labour and incomes of younger men. Economically trying times might see some young men swayed into investing in cattle, but this was most likely to happen in cases where these young men were not directly answerable to more senior male kin, such as in the case of Vuyani Sangwane, the Peteni brothers and Zimasile.

Conclusions

For a number of reasons, cattle-holding constituted a sought-after yet unattainable cultural and economic good for the majority of households in rural Peddie. In reality, cattle-holding and production had become, on the one hand, simply one element of a broad and differentiated *bricolage* of potential livelihood options that people in rural Peddie cobbled together to survive. On the other hand, the continued discursive currency of cattle as cultural icons that were the hallmark of the successful (patriarchal) *umzi* provided a powerful model for men in particular to aspire to own at least some cattle.

What I have explored in this appendix was the extent to which cattle-holding served the interests of different age cohorts of men. Undoubtedly, considerable social dividends accrued to cattle-holding households and the men who headed them, but only as long as their herds of cattle were seen to be employed to the benefit of their

households and to the community at large. This was partly why Khayaletu ploughed people's fields with his oxen, albeit at a fee, and why young boys consumed considerable amounts of *amasi* [sour milk] at his homestead. The key implication was that cattle-ownership by individual homesteads was not as intrinsically socially embedded as senior men, whose interests were well served by owning cattle, would like to portray it. Rather, within the existing, increasingly contested, patriarchal hegemony of the rural Peddie household and village, cattle had to be properly deployed in particular culturally scripted ways that maximised the wider social dividends of investing in them.

Not surprisingly, these cultural prescriptions suited some people and were anathema to others. Senior men who held cattle sought constantly to reassert, at a number of levels, the cultural connection between investments in cattle-ownership and the overall *ukwakh'umzi* project. Senior men without cattle were more ambivalent. The association between cattle and *ukwakh'umzi* was contested by a number of other categories of people, including the sons who were not *omkhulu* [the first-born son] in their homes. It was also a site of struggle for single mothers seeking material support from the fathers of their children, while wives and daughters might also contest this association by pointing to the fact that 'cattle can die at any time' and thus rated poorly in comparison to other avenues of saving and investment.

APPENDIX EIGHT:

Case-studies of ritual events and the business of rituals

The elderly wife of Mr. Mkhaya died two months after I began fieldwork in Hamburg, on 5 December 2000. Mrs. Mkhaya had been ill for some time prior to her death. It was an emotionally and ritually fraught time for the family as Mr. Mkhaya's grandson was 'in the bush', undergoing the high-risk male initiation ritual, at the time of her death.

Case One: The funeral of Mrs. Mkhaya¹

In the course of the two weeks leading up to the funeral, the Mkhaya *umzi* was a hive of activity as close and extended family members began to arrive from Port Elizabeth, East London, Whittlesea, Dimbaza, Alice and Stutterheim. Many close family members who arrived in the village from towns brought with them groceries, vegetables and cash contributions to assist the family. One of the two *itshipa* [absconder] Mkhaya sons arrived from Port Elizabeth and helped a good deal with the various tasks allocated to men in relation to the funeral preparations. The other, younger, son, who was also an *itshipa* in Port Elizabeth, embarrassed the family by not returning to the village to attend his own mother's funeral, something that was noticed by people in the village and caused a minor stir in the family during the preparations for the funeral.

Local people from Hamburg and neighbouring villages visited the bereaved family regularly in the period between Mrs. Mkhaya's death and the day of the funeral. Other people visited mostly in small groups from particular church denominations, with the Sunday prior to the funeral being an especially busy one, with church groups (comprising up to ten people, most of them women) that came from *Tamara* (a village near King William's Town) and from Alice. All these visitors held prayer services with members of the Mkhaya family. Several carloads of young men and women travelling between Port Elizabeth and East London during this period of bereavement leading up to the funeral

¹ As I was resident in the Mkhaya homestead during my fieldwork, I had a close-up view of this funeral and I present the case in considerable detail.

stopped by the Mkhaya home briefly to offer their condolences. On every occasion, the friends travelling with the person(s) who had come to pay their respects were also welcomed and fed. Several times, once introductions were made, people had been satisfactorily identified – in terms of their clan affiliations and ‘homes’ - and news shared, these people were asked what their employer (for example, Telkom, Eskom or a provincial government department) was doing to help ‘the people of Peddie or Hamburg’. Many of these visitors were related to the Mkhaya family, but others were friends and even patients.² Visitors during this period were always offered home-baked bread, biscuits and soft drinks. Friends who travelled from further afield to offer their condolences frequently left with bags of potatoes, beetroot or onions from Mr. Mkhaya’s vegetable garden.³

Prayer meetings were held nightly in the Mkhaya *rontawu* which, like most homesteads in the village, is used for hosting rituals. Given that the Mkhayas are Methodists, the local Methodist women’s group was the mainstay of these vigils, but no discrimination against groups from other churches was evident during vigils.⁴ Prayers, singing (led by women) and preaching (mostly led by men) lasted as long as two hours every evening. A further well-known division of labour was followed here, with Wednesdays being the day when ‘the youth’ of the village arrived in numbers to console the bereaved family. Vigils on Thursdays, customarily the day that women of various Christian denominations attend *umanyano* prayer groups, were dedicated to these women’s groups.

Certain women in the village, especially kin, church members and those who have enjoyed assistance from the Mkhaya family in the past knew that they were expected to help with domestic chores and would arrive daily at the homestead to learn how and where they could assist the family. Relatives (especially women affines) were sent around the village, ostensibly to borrow big pots and cooking utensils, from the members of the family’s social networks. The homesteads visited included those of kin, clansmen (*Dlamini*

² Mr. Mkhaya was a well-known *ixhwele* [herbalist], with patients all over the Eastern Cape.

³ This was standard practice among older people in rural villages in Peddie District. Not to give a visitor some produce from one’s field or garden was regarded as poor form indeed.

⁴ I did, however, observe a general impatience from the members of other denominations directed at the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) group. These other groups made not so discrete attempts to limit the time and opportunities of the SDA group to preach and pray at these vigils, which created a problem for Mr. Mkhaya, as the leader of the SDA group was his neighbour and the families were close friends.

clan), neighbours and friends. In this way, news about the state of the funeral preparations, the arrival of visitors and the problems⁵ that had emerged at the Mkhaya *umzi* were discussed in detail over garden fences and cups of tea around the village.

As the second week progressed, preparations for the funeral itself progressed more urgently. Among the visitors were the office-bearers and members of the two burial societies to which Mr. Mkhaya, a church-going Methodist, belonged. They came to hand over the contributions (R2,000 and R1,500) from their respective societies and to pray for the family. Arrangements were also made to get the marquee tent that the Ocean Burial Society owns to the Mkhaya home for use during the funeral service. Members of the family travelled to Peddie and King William's Town several times to select and purchase a casket, to co-ordinate matters with the undertakers and to buy groceries. Men, both family members and neighbours, were given the task of getting the homestead in order. Some put up curtain rails to hang new curtains in the home. The curtains were made by Mr. Mkhaya's daughter, who had come from Dimbaza, where she ran a sewing business from her home. Several men applied themselves to putting a fresh coat of paint on all the buildings in the homestead and tidying and weeding the yard. Cutting the grass in the yard was undertaken by a fictive son of Mr. Mkhaya's, who used a lawn-mower that he had brought especially for this task from his home in Berlin (near East London).

Mr. Daliso, who is a *Dlamini* clansman of Mr. Mkhaya's, and who is closely associated with the family, was dispatched to a neighbouring village where it was learnt a cow was for sale. Daliso was to inspect and then purchase this cow, which would be slaughtered for the funeral. When the animal was driven home later by *amakwedini* [boys], it was deemed by Mr. Mkhaya and other men to be too small to feed to the number of mourners who were expected at the funeral. Further arrangements had to be made urgently to purchase another animal from the Mawe herd on the other side of the village. This was duly

⁵ One specific problem – which even emerged during prayer vigils – was the continued absence during this period of Mr. Mkhaya's *itshipa* son. Several informants recalled the long-standing tensions between this son and his sister, who was very close to her deceased mother and was one of the main organisers and funders of the funeral. The tension with his sister had caused this son to turn his back on his home some years before and to stay in Humansdorp, where he was said to be working on a 'chokka' fishing boat. He finally arrived a week after the funeral, and stayed for the *umgidi* to welcome the *ikrwala* [new man] back from the bush.

done. The first animal, purchased by Daliso, would be exchanged with Khayaletu Mapayi (also *Dlamini* clan) for a bigger one later. This second animal would be slaughtered to welcome the *mkhwetha* [initiate] back from the bush, three weeks after the funeral.

Other tasks included dispatching men and several boys early during the first week to collect firewood with an ox-drawn 'scotch' cart. By the time the funeral took place on Saturday 16 December, they had made three trips to the nearby forest and had been paid R50 a trip by Mr. Mkhaya.

Arrangements were made for a local church choir to sing at the funeral and permission sought and granted to use the chairs from the primary school on the day of the funeral. Preparing food for the many visitors who paid their respects during the week and then for the prospective mourners at the funeral was well-orchestrated by *MaTshezi*, the wife of the Mkhayas' oldest son. This entailed much hard work from a large group of women, some of them the young wives of men in the extended Mkhaya family. Other women were enlisted (but not paid) from around the village to help with this task. Young girls in the extended Mkhaya family were constantly washing pots and dishes. They were also given the tasks of springcleaning the interior of each building of the homestead and washing all the windows. They washed all the bedding and were responsible for washing by hand the clothes of the many visitors who stayed at the *umzi* during this period.

On Thursday (two days before the funeral), there was need to hire a pick-up truck to collect all the groceries bought at a wholesaler in King William's Town. The Mkhayas' daughter wanted to drive to Whittlesea where she is employed as a nurse to buy three sheep for the funeral (a four-hour round trip). Her reason was that sheep are much cheaper there than around East London. The vehicle that was hired broke down and they were finally forced to buy the sheep at Berlin (near East London) on the morning of the funeral, two of which were slaughtered before the funeral commenced. The third sheep was to be slaughtered for the family's *ibhokwe yamanzi* [the goat of water] ritual the morning after the funeral, when the family would be ritually cleansed. This daughter, who took the lead in organising her mother's funeral, ensured that the funeral programmes were printed and that the polystyrene containers and

plastic cutlery in which to serve food to the mourners at the funeral were purchased.

Early on Friday morning, around fifteen (mostly but not exclusively young) men of the village assembled to dig the grave for the deceased in the Hamburg graveyard. It was unheard of that they would not do so, I was told, and even hard drinkers regularly turned up for this work. I questioned why young men, who make virtually no contribution unless they were paid, to homestead and village projects, should be so reliable in this regard. The response was that it was because they fear that, if they did not participate in this task that was specifically that of *abafana* [young men] every time, others might stay away when their family had a funeral and a grave-digging team was required. Nevertheless, some young men opted out of the grave-digging and instead assembled at the Mkhaya home to collect and set up the marquee tent in time for the funeral the following day.

On the Friday afternoon before the funeral, the second cow deemed suitable to feed the mourners was slaughtered by about ten young men. This was done outside the byre, indicating that it was not a ritual slaughter, and no activities associated with the ancestors took place. The *iziphakathi* [innards] were roasted over an open flame and eaten by the men present, with the older men present being offered the liver.

Later on Friday, the evening vigil was opened with a prayer for family members which lasted for about a hour from 21h00 to 22h00. Then the *umlindo* [the funeral vigil] commenced. It was attended by maybe 40 or 50 people, mostly women, and held in the homestead's *rontawu* [round, one-roomed house used for beerdrinks and other rituals, also referred to as the 'great hut']. The *umlindo* lasted right through the night, with singing, preaching and praying. Around 5h00 on Saturday morning, people began returning to their homes to wash and prepare for the funeral itself.

Around 8h30, the undertaker arrived with the body of the deceased which was inspected by the men in the family and then ceremonially welcomed with a prayer service. Thereafter, the family and close friends were given a last chance to see the deceased in state. This welcoming service was closed with another prayer.

Two educated young people were seated near the entrance to the Mkhaya homestead, where they welcomed mourners and kept a record of all people who, upon arrival at the funeral, made cash contributions towards the costs of the funeral. This record would allow the Mkhaya family to acknowledge these contributions and to reciprocate when the opportunity arose to do so in future.

The employees of the 'funeral parlour' [undertaker] from Peddie town meanwhile busied themselves with getting the sound system set up. This included an amplifier, speaker system and a lapel microphone. It was around 10h00 when the funeral service began. A prominent educated man in the village⁶ played the role of Master of Ceremonies. A local *Bantu Church of Christ* preacher was given the first opportunity to speak. He was followed by a man who read the obituary. The whole service was punctuated regularly by hymns led by the choir, but which most of the congregation joined in singing heartily. Then other speakers (men and women) told those present about the life of the deceased. Her visibly distraught brother briefly told the mourners who she was (family name and clan-name) and where she had grown up. Others spoke about what sort of person she had been and what contribution she made to the community.

One senior man, a neighbour of the Mkhaya family, spoke about what a good wife and mother Mrs. Mkhaya had been. This was clear, he said, in the way that, even when Mr. Mkhaya was away, his wife could always be found at home, doing the washing or ironing the clothes. This meant that she was always ready to welcome visitors of which this household had many (since Mr. Mkhaya is a well-known *ixhwele* [herbalist]). Also, he said, after she had collected her pension or did her shopping in the village, she could always be observed going straight home and not standing around gossiping with other women. His speech seemed to divide the mourners into two camps. Many of the villagers, both men and women, nodded approvingly as he spoke. What he said was, however, greeted with gasps, hisses and loud murmurs of disapproval from several of the well-heeled young women who had arrived in Hamburg from East London, Port Elizabeth and other towns to attend the funeral. Familiar with the 'modern' discourse of women's rights and equality between the sexes, these young women found his speech patronising and

⁶ Villagers gauged the standing of the bereaved family on these occasions by the status of the men and women (kin and non-kin) who officiated and spoke at their funerals.

further confirmation of why, at least from their perspective, rural areas remain outmoded backwaters where patriarchal values still applied.

Two further speakers gave detailed and moving accounts of Mrs. Mkhaya's illness and subsequent death. A nursing sister from the hospital in Peddie where Mrs. Mkhaya had died was one of those who spoke about how she bore her final illness with great dignity and without ever complaining. A young male relative was given the responsibility of reading out the messages on the wreaths, most of which were from close family. An especially moving tribute came in the form of a card from the initiate who had just returned from the 'bush', who was the grandson of the deceased Mrs. Mkhaya.

Mr. Mkhaya's good friend, the elderly Mr. Macwembe (the oldest man in Hamburg) was given several opportunities to speak, one of which was as a leader of the Ocean Burial Society. The representatives of the other two local burial societies, as well as the undertaker himself, who was from Peddie town, were also given a chance to speak. All of them explained in some detail to the mourners present how their society worked and how much they paid out to bereaved members, and so on, causing Mr. Macwembe to joke about their respective marketing efforts. The undertaker, in particular, positioned himself in the camp of the ruling party (the ANC), telling the mourners how his company was owned by black people with the sole purpose of serving and 'uplifting' black people. This long-winded harangue also brought several impatient sighs and *sotto voce* comments from the mourners.

At this point, with the speeches and formalities out of the way, the invited minister had still not arrived to deliver his sermon. To fill this gap, Mr. Daliso was called upon to thank all the people who had helped to organise the funeral. By the time he had finished doing so, the invited minister, in this case the Methodist minister from the Peddie circuit, had arrived. He proceeded to give a rather long and colourful sermon, which many people appreciated.

Then the choir burst into song yet again while the coffin was placed inside the hearse. The congregation moved by car and by foot down to the graveyard, which was about a kilometre by road from the Mkhaya residence. Here the service continued, led by the Methodist minister and other male preachers. Finally, Mrs. Mkhaya was laid to rest, in a grave that had a magnificent view

over the Keiskamma River estuary. Once the family and others had placed handfuls of soil in the grave, all the men present (except the senior and bereaved men) sprang into action, taking turns to shovel the soil that closed the grave. Thereafter, people returned to the Mkhaya *umzi* where they washed their hands at the entrance to the yard and then received a cup of juice and a slice or two of bread.

Polystyrene hampers of food, which included meat from the slaughtered cow, rice and vegetables were distributed by young women, starting with the immediate family, the dignitaries and the senior men present. They also distributed bottled soft drinks to everyone present. Overall, the mood was sombre. There was plenty of meat and many people requested second and even third servings of meat. Soon after eating, ordinary villagers began to leave. Many Hamburg people departed without taking their leave of the family. Visitors from further afield stayed on, chatting to local people and to members of the extended family. Some members of the extended family, especially younger adults, were clearly meeting each other for the first time or after long periods of not having seen each other. They exchanged news, eyed and commented on each other's hairstyles, dress-style and fashion accessories, compared notes on the people they knew who were employed in government positions, and exchanged cell-phone numbers.

The funeral had been an emotionally draining and physically exhausting period for the Mkhaya household. Many had contributed their labour to ensuring that the funeral was carried on without any embarrassment to the family. Several members of the family had made considerable financial contributions. The fictive 'son' from Berlin had contributed R1,000 in cash. The one *umgalelo* club to which Mr. Mkhaya belonged had contributed 20 cases of soft drinks. An 'aunt' from East London had contributed 'all the vegetables' used to feed people after the funeral. Mr. Mkhaya's daughter spent R6,900 buying various things, mostly consumables, for the funeral. With her father, she paid a further R5,300 towards the casket and an additional amount for services rendered by the 'funeral parlour' in Peddie town. The funeral was later reliably estimated to have cost close to R15,000.

This case-study illustrates the extent to which funerals were major social occasions that were hosted by the bereaved household, but which implicated and drew on a vast network of extended family, local clansmen and women, female affines, as well as local and town-based extended social networks. Rural funerals had become a focus for considerable material transfers between town and country. Funerals also provided occasions for the circulation of money and other resources within rural villages, along socially defined pathways. Funerals of the kind and scale hosted by the Mkhaya family entailed considerable financial outlay by the family concerned. This outlay was partly offset by their membership of local burial societies and other co-operative and savings clubs in the village. In the case described above, however, a significant proportion of the money spent actually went towards paying for the services of the undertaker in Peddie town and towards the purchase of groceries at a 'discount store' in King William's Town.

The case-study also points to the contingent nature of ritual practice and the slaughter of animals. The Mkhaya household were Methodists and, while they slaughtered a cow and two sheep for the funeral, this was with the express aim of feeding the mourners, and not for ritual purposes. The slaughter of an animal which was previously regarded as a cultural requirement at the burial of the male household head, in line with the *ukukhapa* ritual, has now been widened to include the funerals of both men and women. Since people expected to be fed in a certain way at the funerals hosted by all but the poorest homesteads, and complained amongst themselves when the catering (especially the provision of meat) did not meet their expectations, it was very common for well-to-do families to slaughter for these occasions.

Case Two: Mrs. Mapunga lays her husband to rest

In November 2000, Mrs. Mapunga's husband died and the family organised a substantial funeral to bury him. The Mapungas are Methodists, and one of the well-respected 'old families' in Hamburg. They arranged to purchase a cow for the funeral from Mrs. Lubushe (a widow in Hamburg) for R2,000. The funeral service followed the format that is typical of the funerals of relatively well-off families in rural Peddie District, with many of the same elements as the Mkhaya funeral described above. Mr. Mapunga was duly laid to rest on

Saturday afternoon, after a service led by a Methodist minister from another village in Peddie District, who is related to the Mapunga family. After the burial, mourners were fed and given bottled soft drinks at the homestead of the bereaved family and then many of them went to their homes.

What is interesting about this case (although not unusual, I was informed) is that the Mapunga family had bought a second animal, an ox from Msondeli Ngcanga in Hamburg for R2,500. This animal was to be ritually slaughtered in the byre on the Sunday morning directly following the funeral. For this ritual, the Mapunga men, their kinsmen and the Mapunga sons and daughters were in the byre to witness the same Methodist minister speaking to their ancestors.⁷ He informed them that this ox was being slaughtered to send Mr. Mapunga to meet them (i.e. *ukukhapa*) and that the family would bring him back when they got the chance to do so. Thereafter, the animal was ritually slaughtered by the men in the family and the meat was cooked. People were fed and then, especially those who had travelled from afar, started to leave almost immediately to travel back to their homes. The Mapunga family spent R13,900 on laying their father to rest in this manner. Mrs. Mapunga provided the names of twelve women, including *oomolokazana* ['daughters-in-law' or affines] of the extended family, whose labour was central to the success of the work. Three of these female affines travelled from Mgwala village, about 40 kilometres from Hamburg, to assist the bereaved family.

Rituals seldom took place as once-off events, but were often connected to each other and to the larger schema of homestead religious, moral and social practice. There was apparently an increasingly experimental and selective turn with regard to the conducting of some of these rituals, which several of my informants commented on. People suggested that some of the rituals that were conducted these days, such as *intonjane* [female initiation], although not 'new' as such, were localised phenomena, in that people in particular areas or villages had started to conduct them again after a long absence.

⁷ See Mtuze (2003: 80) for other examples of this phenomenon.

The hosting of the important *ukubuyisa* [to return home]⁸ ritual during which an ox was slaughtered was always preceded, I was told, by the preparatory *ukutshayeleva inkundla* [to sweep the courtyard] ritual. *Ukutshayeleva* involved slaughtering a goat and brewing beer to signal to the ancestors, the agnatic kin group and to the community at large that the *ukubuyisa* ritual (at which an ox will be slaughtered) was to follow soon after, usually within days. Important rituals such as *ukubuyisa* were often followed some months later by a beerdrink called *ukuvasa izitya* [to wash the dishes]. One consequence of this sequential nature of rituals was that poorer households struggle to conduct the whole sequence of rituals within the appropriate time-frames and relied heavily on their social networks for assistance in conducting the sequence of connected rituals.

The *ulwaluko* ritual⁹

The *ulwaluko* [male initiation] ritual complex remained an essential ritual that must be conducted by all homesteads with sons. To fail to do so would be to subject the family, and the individual in particular, to ridicule in the village and beyond. During the *ulwaluko* ritual, boys between the ages of 17 and 25 years were first circumcised and then made to live in a secluded area away from the village for a period of three to six weeks. The period may sometimes be longer, but was adjusted to suit the contingencies and demands of schooling and work commitments (cf. Mayer & Mayer 1971: 13, Gitywa 1976). After the seclusion period, the initiates were welcomed back into the community as men. The ritual was the most significant marker of *ubudoda* [manhood], since it separated uncircumcised boys from the realm of men. It also provided the basis for the Xhosa male age-ranking system. This ranking system was reckoned on the time a man was circumcised rather than his chronological age, so that a chronologically older man who was circumcised later was expected to use the term *bhuti* [older brother] when addressing a younger man (Gitywa 1976; Ngxamngxa 1971).

Ideally, and generally in practice in Hamburg and Loverstwest, the *ulwaluko* ritual was preceded by the *imbeleko* ritual, which was performed to introduce an infant or young

⁸ Also known as the *ukuguqula* [to turn around] ritual (Hammond-Tooke 1974b: 352), this ritual was especially important for non-Christians but was also practised by households whose members were predominantly Christian (Mtuze 2003: 84-86).

⁹ The most detailed description of the *ulwaluko* ritual is still that of Wilson *et al.* (1952: 199-220).

child to the ancestors (Soga 1932; Mtuze 2003: 64). Seven of the 29 cattle slaughterings (or 24%) that were recorded in Hamburg village took place to mark either the beginning or the end stage of the *ulwaluko* ritual.¹⁰ Wherever possible, households would incur considerable expense in meeting the cultural and social expectations of the *ulwaluko* ritual complex. Given the potential for medical complications and bewitchment, this ritual was fraught with (natural and supernatural) uncertainty that needed to be managed by investments in ritual activities so as to ensure a smooth passage for the vulnerable initiate (see Van Vuuren & De Jongh 1999; Gitywa 1976).

The slaughtering of a beast to celebrate the return of the *ikrwala* [lit.unripe fruit, a new man] was not regarded by all as *isiko* [Xhosa custom]. In fact, there was significant variation in exactly how the ritual was conducted. At some homesteads, the *umngcamo* ritual was held the day before the boy was circumcised and went into seclusion. A goat or a beast may be slaughtered for this ritual. In other cases, no beast was slaughtered and the main slaughter ritual took place once the new man emerged safely from the bush. In such cases, an *umguyo* [dance] will be held on the night before circumcision. I do not attempt to analyse the nature of the variation in such practices (but see Raum & De Jager [1972:139], who suggest that non-Christian households conduct an *umguyo*). In Hamburg, especially among church-goers, the beast was frequently slaughtered outside the byre and by any young men from the village, not only by agnatic kinsmen of the homestead. However, among some Church members, including members of the Wesleyan Methodist church, the *umngcamo* ritual that formed part of the *ulwaluko* process involved the ritual slaughter of a cow in the byre.¹¹

The entire *ulwaluko* ritual ideally took place in a village context and the sons of town-based families were frequently sent to the rural homes of trusted kinspeople to be circumcised and initiated into manhood. The *ulwaluko* ritual was a celebration of Xhosa manhood par excellence. Undergoing circumcision furnished men with 'recognised status, the privilege of marriage, independence from [their] parents, new responsibilities, an ethnic (that is Xhosa) identity...a circumcised person becomes trusted, desirable and respected' (Van Vuuren & de Jongh 1999: 144). Uncircumcised

¹⁰ Twenty rituals related to *ulwaluko* involved the slaughter of either a goat or cow (often both, but for different phases of the ritual). Eight of the rituals connected to *ulwaluko* did not involve the slaughter of either a cow or a goat.

¹¹ Gitywa (1976: 179ff) notes that the *umngcamo* ritual involves the ritual slaughter of a goat.

‘men’ are not men at all, but remained boys, no matter how old they were. They may not speak at public gatherings and they would almost certainly not find a Xhosa woman willing to marry them (Ramphela 2000: 112-113).

Women, including close kin of the initiates, were excluded from virtually the entire ritual and the initiates were forbidden to have any contact with women during their period of seclusion, which lasted from three to eight weeks. Instead, the circumcision itself was performed by a male surgeon, or *ingcibi*, and the initiates were subsequently cared for by *ikhankatha* [a male nurse or guardian], who was entrusted by the family with the task of ensuring their son’s speedy recovery. While secluded in the bush, the initiates were assisted by *amaqalathi* [young boys], who brought them food and firewood. The initiates were instructed to run away if they should see a woman during their seclusion, as women were regarded as being *umlaza* [ritually impure] and thus as a danger to them during this time.

After seven or eight days of seclusion, the *umshwamo* or *ukojisa* ritual was performed at the seclusion lodge. It involved the ritual slaughter of a goat, which was to secure the blessings of the ancestors, to ensure that the wound heals well. This ritual also released the initiate from his food taboos, which were implemented from the moment of circumcision and included only boiled mealies, pumpkins and melons and little or no water. The initiate was first made to eat the *intsonyama* [the front foreleg of the goat] alone, i.e the *ukushwama* [the ritual tasting], after which other men attending the ritual ate the rest of the meat. In Hamburg, *mqombothi* and brandy were also consumed as part of this ritual, which involved only men. I found that initiates whose families were unable to afford to slaughter a goat for *ukojisa* were included in the ritual conducted by the family of an initiate who was in seclusion nearby.

For the purposes of my analysis, it was the *ukuyala* [ritual admonition] to which the *amakrwala* [new men] were subjected to upon their return to the village after the period of seclusion, that is especially revealing. Senior men from the village were invited to address the initiates. They converged on the respective byres of the father or other senior patrilineal relative of the initiates. Upon being collected by a group of men from the village, the *amakrwala* were taken down to a nearby river to be washed. The *ibhuma* [seclusion huts or lodges] were set alight and destroyed by fire as soon as the

initiates had departed. The initiates were then led into the byre, surrounded by the group of men who shielded them from the view of the many women who had gathered to ululate and welcome them home. They were told to sit motionless to the right of the byre entrance and towards the back of the byre, which was close to where the ancestors are said to reside. Here, the penis of each initiate was subjected to a careful and public inspection by the senior men present, to see that the circumcision wound had healed properly. Then each initiate was stripped of his blanket, made to stand naked in the byre - though still shielded from the prying eyes of women - and ritually anointed with butter. Thereafter, the assembled men, in order of age seniority, proceed to admonish them on how they were expected to behave as Xhosa men (cf. Gitywa 1976: 208). Their faces were then decorated with *imbola* [red ochre], a task that was usually performed by a young girl, who was often a sister or other patrilineal relative. Only then did the initiates proceed indoors where they were welcomed by their female relatives and neighbours, who gave them small gifts to celebrate their safe return and their new status.

The quotations below are from a particular case of returning initiates that I witnessed in Hamburg.¹² The initiate was admonished by various men present in the byre. The first person to address the initiate was his paternal grandfather, who also smeared butter on the initiate.

When a person comes from the bush, he is smeared with the fat of a cow [i.e. butter] over his whole body. It is necessary that you buy a cow which means, with the very first wage that you earn. That is why we smear the fat of a cow all over you... We use butter because we have a strong belief in cattle. One thing that we like is that a man must have cattle... Now my child, as I smear you with this fat, I want this fat to bring you luck and blessings. When you work over there, the first thing you must buy is a cow. Start with cattle. After you have bought a cow, you can then think about buying other things, but you must start by buying a cow. With these words I am saying, I pray and ask God to keep you safe... These are the words of the elderly people of the *amaZizi* [clan]. Let me pause now, I say thank you. I won't talk a lot, about the words I have spoken here to this boy while I have

¹² This was the return of Mandla, the grandson of my host, Mr. Mkhaya, from the bush. He returned on 14 December 2000, just days before his grandmother's funeral. Because the homestead was in mourning, the *umgidi* [celebration of his safe return] was postponed until 6 January 2001.

completed smearing him. Now, *maZizi* [clansmen, including ancestors], let me thank the old people, the big men, who have come to talk to this boy to show this child the things that can give him guidance to protect him from bad influences.

Lisolomzi Sangwane, who was a neighbour of the Mkhaya family but not a kinsmen of the initiate, then stood up and addressed the initiate thus:

Sanangile [an old fashioned way of addressing an initiate]...dear friends, here is R2. I heard this old man say that you will buy a cow, yes...cattle should be here in the kraal. I understand this to be the truth. Now I am trying to assist with this thing...yes, I am trying to assist with this cow that you are aiming to buy by collecting this money. Yes friends, I am at this point now. You see now, the thing that you asked for, that you wanted, that is what you have received. What you said, namely to go to the bush and become a man. You see now that manhood starts like this: when you came from over here [seclusion], a house was built for you [by us]. This thing tells you that a man does not stay in the forest, he stays in a house.¹³ A man leaves the kraal and goes into a house [i.e. circumcision lodge]. Before now, he left the kraal to go to the *ihlati* [forest], then he came back and now he is in the kraal again. This kraal, then, shows that where there are people, there will always be a kraal. A house [too] will never disappear where there is a person, because a person lives in a house, not in the forest. All these things have been done here to you and you have seen them. Here, there are cattle, do you see the manure? What has made it? Cattle. Cattle now, what this old man [has] said to you, is that the first thing is the cow. The cow is the bank of the Xhosa people. Us, we live like this, we live with cattle. When we were born, there was manure... here it is, it is here today too.¹⁴ You stand [live] on it and it must be like that in your manhood [i.e. adult life]. There are many things that hold people, and the children of people, back, many things...you must not commit them. There are many things out there that you are going to meet, but you should not commit them. If you do, you will throw away all the things that have been said here. And this manure will

¹³ See Mayer and Mayer (1990: 37) where these oppositions and others are discussed in relation to Xhosa male circumcision.

¹⁴ On similar speeches dating from 50 years earlier, expressing remarkably similar sentiments about 'buying cattle' and 'making manure in the cattle kraal' to build their homes, see Wilson *et al.* (1952: 217-219).

disappear if you enter into the things that are out there...You must take care of this old man [pointing to the initiate's grandfather], you look after him and don't you ever forget this old man...Help then, my friend, you will never try something that will disappoint...No, let me sit...

Mr. Daliso, a close clansman (*Dlamini*) of the family, had similar words to say to the initiate:

My son, you must listen to the advice of your grandfather...You must not disgrace us in this village of Hamburg, don't disgrace this place where you have learned. It is said, when they speak, that this is a child of Mkhaya's. You must protect your surname...Here it is, the R2, my son [places a R2 coin on the ground]...A person who gets money must formulate an idea about how to save it. Because people who do not save money end up...This thing [the gifts of money you receive] enables that thing [the cow you will buy] to be realised. ...You have good luck, Mandla. You see that there are cattle here...A man, when he starts, will work for that cow that was spoken about. It comes out [starts] there...[then] he will buy corrugated iron to build his own flat...this is a good start towards being successful...All these things that you have heard here today, you should put around your neck like a necklace...You [must] not go to the beach¹⁵, because you are an initiate. You do not go to the hotel, you must not go anywhere in a group of initiates like goats. You must stay at home and look after the brushwood of the kraal and look after the whole [homestead]...

Similar words were spoken more briefly and less convincingly by the initiate's paternal uncle, perhaps because he was unemployed and struggling financially to support his large family.

Yes...I will just explain like this. Initiate, these people who have spoken here, they have not spoken nonsense. Maybe none of them has got out on the side [gone astray] in their own lives, everyone of them continues to go straight [on the correct path]...The *umkhwetha*'s house...[has been left

¹⁵ Hamburg was on the coast and young people from the village sometimes went to the beach to drink and to socialise away from the eyes of their elders. A number of alcohol-related assaults and stabbings only reinforced the ambivalence of older people towards this venue.

behind]. Now, you must work within the rules of this house... You are going to see again sometime... that it is necessary that when you think of a plan, you start to build yourself. Build a flat fit for yourself, buy things like a bed and *zincs* [corrugated iron]. Then you will see again, maybe you will live with a... wife. But first you will suffer, you must work and collect money to buy a thing [then] you will have your own house... To make a noise is not necessary in some places, in other places, it is necessary to ask a person older than you [for advice]. We don't criticise older people. I stop there.

Thereafter, Mr. Mkhaya thanked the assembled young men who had helped with various aspects of getting the initiate home safely, giving them R50 to share. He also thanked other men present for assisting with funeral preparations around the homestead and gave this group R50 as well. This was probably done because, as a teetotaler, Mr. Mkhaya did not supply brandy for the men to drink on this occasion. He also thanked and paid the *inkhankatha* [ritual nurse] R100 for his services. Then he asked Mr. Daliso, his classificatory son, to announce the news that the *umgidi* [party] would take place at a later date, as the homestead was in mourning. A container of *marewu* [a non-alcoholic, fermented drink] and tea, soft drinks and *irostile* [roasted bread] were served to the men. The young men, however, dispersed soon thereafter, heading for the 'bottle-store' to buy brandy with the money they had received from Mr. Mkhaya. From the byre, the initiate proceeded to the main Mkhaya house, where he was welcomed by his mother and other women relatives in an uncharacteristically subdued fashion. He received small gifts from them and would remain indoors for the rest of the day, receiving his friends.

What these quotations indicate is the extent to which, certainly for the two older men, cattle 'in their key symbolizing capacity... objectivize and naturalize an overarching order of social arrangements' (Comaroff 1985: 72). The injunction by the older men to the *ikrwala* that he was to buy cattle reinforces the dominant masculine idiom of the man as breadwinner. It speaks of their desire to socialise and economically orientate the more individualistic ambitions of this and other young men. In this sense, it seems to me, the instruction to the initiate to invest in cattle is 'really about' securing his acceptance of the (patriarchal) values and responsibilities of helping to build his natal homestead and thus the rural village. However, what comes through in the two

addresses of the younger men to the initiate is their decreasing faith in this patriarchal cattle economy and the moral economy it stood for. The two younger men, neither of them successful cattle-owners, spoke not of only buying cattle to build his grandfather's homestead. Perhaps basing their speeches on their own painful experiences of trying to make ends meet, they spoke more of the initiate building his own flat, buying a bed and other possessions and then marrying. They also spoke about the social behaviour and deportment expected of a young man, directing him to spend his time working around the house, rather than frequenting the hotel or wandering around the village with other young (and idle) men, which could result in socially disruptive behaviour and disgrace for his home.

The business of performing rituals

As I have suggested, the timing and organising of rituals hinted at their crucial role in creatively engaging town-based, diasporic household members in contributing financially to the hosting of rituals and to attending rituals held in rural villages. This task seemed more urgent for people in Hamburg than in Loverstwit, as the local formal job market imploded¹⁶ and more of Hamburg's somewhat better-educated younger generation threatened to splinter off and set up more or less independent homes in towns.

Given that people in Loverstwit had been living there for less than 20 years, were less well-equipped in terms of educational levels and thus employment prospects, and that many were still steeped in the very real day-to-day material challenges of *building their homesteads*, this village seemed to have less of a problem in this regard. Paradoxically, compared to Hamburg, Loverstwit was far better connected, in terms of daily vehicular access, to Peddie town, and to the urban centres of East London, King William's Town and Port Elizabeth, than Hamburg was.

Despite these differences, in both villages the co-operative project of *ukwakh'umzi* involved mobilising the co-ordinated efforts of both village and town-based members

¹⁶ My fieldwork coincided with a strong drive to close the Hamburg Police Station and transfer the local policemen to other stations. Also, Hamburg Municipality ceased to exist in 2000, when it was formally incorporated into Ngqushwa Municipality, which has offices in Peddie town. This placed the future of several relatively well-paid local jobs in jeopardy.

of each homestead. By harnessing the powerful and integrative sanction of ritual, this was the end that many rural people at least sought to promote and achieve (cf. Peoples 1987; Crain 1998: 146ff).

With the exception of Bigalke (1969) and Steyn (1982 and 1988), the literature on the aggregate numbers of cattle that were slaughtered for ritual purposes in the reserve areas of the former Ciskei is surprisingly thin.¹⁷ In Ainslie (2002b), I point out that this was a serious lacuna in our understanding of the production and consumption of cattle in the former reserve areas of the Eastern Cape. It is not, however, that the important role of ritual slaughter in the consumption and exchange of cattle and small stock has gone unnoticed. Indeed, white farmers have for generations been making a useful income by supplying this market. What is of concern is that, although it was acknowledged as important, there has been no attempt to systematically document the extent of this ritual consumption of cattle and small stock. Bigalke (1969), for instance, recorded 58 ritual slaughters in 'the area of one Ndlambe headman' in the Tyolumnqa area over a two-year period. This number, he acknowledged, represented only a small portion of the rituals that had actually taken place in the area. He went on to note that 'few weekends passed without some ceremonial being held in each village' (Bigalke 1969: 104-5, quoted in Hammond-Tooke 1974c: 353).

Steyn (1982) found that in the period September 1979 to September 1980 40 cattle were slaughtered in the Amatola Basin, an area some 60 kms north-west of Peddie District. He estimated that this figure represented approximately six per cent of the total cattle population of the area at the time. Thirty-two of these cattle were slaughtered for 'tribal ceremonies' (i.e. ritual slaughter). The other eight cattle were slaughtered for private consumption and, although this is somewhat unusual, Steyn found that some of the meat was sold locally.

When Steyn conducted research in Peddie District at the height of the severe drought in the early-to-mid 1980s, he noted that in Nyaniso village only two oxen were

¹⁷ While he acknowledged that 'the considered importance of livestock in the life of Ciskei farmers', and a desire to investigate certain socio-economic variables which may be detrimentally affecting the level of agricultural production', Fraser (1991: 228, 230) did not conduct any in-depth analysis of the number of cattle slaughtered for ritual purposes, except to note that '18 of the 20 cattle slaughtered [in Roxeni and Majwareni villages in Alice district, presumably during the calendar year of 1985] were for customary reasons' (Fraser 1991: 115).

slaughtered in 1983/4, five in 1984/5 and five in 1985/6. In his second fieldwork site, the village of Lujiko, only one ox was slaughtered in 1985/6 (Steyn 1988: 378). An average of just over 11 goats and 8 sheep were slaughtered in Nyaniso over the three-year period, while nearly 15 goats and 9 sheep were ritually slaughtered in Lujiko over the same period (Steyn 1988: 404, 427). Steyn acknowledges, however, that because of the high stock mortalities due to drought at the end of 1983, 'meat became so plentiful...that many animal carcasses were not even consumed or skinned' (Steyn 1988: 371). The depletion of people's herds during this time would certainly have acted as a serious disincentive to the ritual slaughter of animals, as people would have been intent on holding onto their remaining animals.

The data I collected in Hamburg indicate that a total of 99 animals, comprising 33 cattle, 48 goats and 18 sheep, were slaughtered by 51 homesteads in Hamburg while performing 58 different rituals.¹⁸ Of the 33 cattle slaughtered, 22 were purchased, as were at least 43 of the goats¹⁹ and all of the sheep. Twenty of the cattle slaughtered were purchased in the village itself and another two were bought in neighbouring villages. The remaining nine were taken from the byre of the homestead concerned. The total amount spent on purchasing cattle for the purposes of slaughter was R43,186, at an average price of R1,963 per animal. What is of considerable interest here is that it was not the cattle-owning homesteads that were doing all the ritual slaughtering. In fact, only one-third of the cattle slaughtered were taken from the byre of the host homestead. This points to the cultural-religious significance of ritual slaughter for most homesteads, even where they did not have cattle or small stock of their own. It also indicates an active relatively specialised local economy in cattle and goat production, in which the imperatives of slaughter rituals acted as an important mechanism for both repatriating resources back into the village from people in town and for circulating cash in the village itself.

The average price paid for a goat was R416, making a total of R17,888 spent on buying goats and for a sheep R414, so that a total of R7,452 was spent on purchasing sheep for ritual slaughter. In total, the homesteads in Hamburg that purchased animals for the

¹⁸ It could be argued that more people were in a position to conduct slaughter rituals because of the higher rainfall that had resulted in growth in their herds. However, the fact that the majority of people had to purchase the animals needed to slaughter would seem to negate this argument.

¹⁹ My data is incomplete on whether the five remaining goats were actually bought or not.

purpose of slaughtering them during the twelve months for which data were collected expended over R68,526 in doing so. Of course, the purchase of the animal to be slaughtered was by no means the only expense incurred in conducting a ritual, particularly where the ritual in question was a funeral. As I point out above, considerable quantities of food and drinks needed to be purchased at this time, and money was also spent on sprucing up the homestead prior to a funeral or other important ritual event. I suggest that a conservative estimate of the total cost of hosting a slaughter ritual would be between two and three times the amount paid out for the animal to be slaughtered. Expenditure on funerals especially was often far more than this proportion. This would bring the expenditure on rituals involving the slaughter of an animal in Hamburg for the period in question to between R137,000 and R206,000. This was a significant amount of money, especially when collected and spent by only 51 households.

In contrast, the 43 beerdrinks in Hamburg during this time cost R24,295, with the average beerdrink in Hamburg village costing R565. However, this amount was inflated by the extra expenses incurred by a few homesteads in buying clothing and providing other necessary possessions for 'new men', i.e. those young men who had just emerged from male initiation. One homestead paid out R3,614 to host a beerdrink that included buying such items unclear for their *ikrwala* [lit. unripe fruit]. The least spent on a beerdrink in Hamburg during this period was a mere R118.

In Loverstwist, during the eight-month period for which I have data, a total of 30 animals, comprising nine cattle, 19 goats and 2 sheep, was ritually slaughtered. Although not an equivalent record of rituals involving animal slaughter over the full 12-month period, it is striking that people in Loverstwist clearly preferred to use cattle from their own byres for the purposes of ritual slaughter. Of the nine cattle slaughtered, six were taken from the byre of the homestead performing the ritual and one animal was exchanged. Only two cattle were purchased for the purposes of conducting a ritual. Sixty-three per cent of the animals slaughtered were goats, whereas in Hamburg they only comprised 48 per cent of all the animals slaughtered. Proportionally fewer sheep were slaughtered in Loverstwist (6% of animals slaughtered) than in Hamburg (18%). It is difficult to reach definitive conclusions regarding the differences in ritual practice between the two villages since the Loverstwist data are incomplete, but it is clear that

rituals in Loverstwist involved a smaller cash outlay, comparatively fewer slaughter rituals and more beerdrinks.

Rituals were performed as and when households could afford them, though most were held during the holiday periods of December, Easter weekend (March-April) and the period May-June-July (Ngwane 2003: 690ff; Ntshona and Turner 2002; cf. McAllister 2001) when generally large numbers of people have returned to the village for the holidays, often with the express purpose of 'being around' to participate in their own and other people's rituals. Funerals were obviously exceptions to this pattern as these generally took place within two weeks of a person's death. Beer drinks, although they generally entailed appreciably less organisation and expenditure than more elaborate slaughter rituals, were similarly concentrated in these holiday periods but also tended to occur throughout the year. My data show that beerdrinks in Hamburg occurred most frequently in December (13 beerdrinks), followed by smaller peaks in November (7), March (7) and June (7), with May (6) and July (6) also favoured times for the hosting of beerdrinks.²⁰

²⁰ The complete picture in this regard is: Nov (7), Dec (13), Jan (2), Feb (3), Mar (7), Apr (3), May (5), Jun (7), Jul (6), Aug (3), Sep (1) and Oct (2). I have not included the corresponding data from Loverstwist as they do not constitute a full 12-month period.